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Self-Renunciation



SELF-RENUNCIATION

HALF-A-CROWN EDITIONS

OF

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The Spiritual Letters of Archbishop Fénelon.—Letters to Men.

The Spiritual Letters of Archbishop Fénelon.—Letters to Women.

The Spiritual Letters of S. Francis de Sales.

The Spirit of S. Francis de Sales.

The Hidden Life of the Soul.

The Light of the Conscience.

Self-Renunciation.

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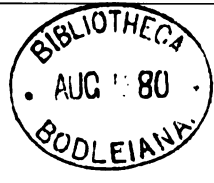
From the French

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION.

SOME explanation seems to be required as an introduction to this volume. It is a Treatise by Guilloré, a Jesuit Father of the last century, a contemporary of Fénelon, and one who, like him, shared with other spiritual writers of that period the reproach of Quietism, though his writings, and specially the work with which we are now immediately concerned, are of a very practical character, leading to inward repose only through a most real and searching discipline of the entire life.

Nothing of specially Roman doctrine occurs in this Treatise. There was no need on this account to omit any single passage, and consequently no occasion to try the questionable experiment of an adapted edition. The Abbé Guilloré wrote no doubt primarily for Religious, but he takes pains to show that he also intended his counsels for others seeking to lead a devout life in the world. His work, therefore, occupies a peculiar position, meeting the separate needs of distinct forms of self-devotion, and at the same time harmonizing them.

The subject with which he deals—the art of dying to self, to live for the love of Jesus (mourir à soi-même, et bien aimer Jésus)—is one peculiarly *fitted to* reconcile the two different modes of *serving God;* for under very various circumstance

self-renunciation lies in either case at the root of all true efforts after perfection. And Guilloré's treatment of the subject is never conventional. He dwells mainly on principles, and the inward struggles of the soul, as they shape themselves under the rules to which it has subjected itself, rather than on definite rules, on technical details themselves.

The work now presented to the English reader is hardly a translation, for a considerable liberty has been taken in abbreviating the original. Nor yet is it to be regarded as a mere condensation of its substance. Guilloré addressed his Conferences to a young friend under his instruction, and they contain much of personal appeal which it seemed unnecessary to reproduce. His style of writing is, moreover, characterized by diffusiveness of a minute kind, and a habit of repetition with but slight variation of idea, which, especially when rendered into a foreign language, would be found wearisome. It is probably in allusion to these characteristics of his style, as well as to the unvarying strictness of his demand for self-sacrifice and spiritual effort, that Faber somewhere speaks of him as "the disheartening and discouraging Guilloré!" In clothing his instructions in an English dress, it has been thought advisable to omit altogether the personal allusions, and freely to abbreviate or condense the main substance of the work, whenever it was judged that nothing of the real subject-matter of the Treatise would *thereby be lost.* It is hoped that this has been *carefully secured,* as it was earnestly desired; for

the abbreviations have in all cases been regulated by a scrupulous regard to the author's meaning and object. In accomplishing this task we have had the benefit of a practised writer, one well known and esteemed, and gifted with a special tact in rendering a foreign language with a lucidness and freedom at once faithful and familiar.

It will not perhaps be out of place to add a few remarks, as to the relation existing between the regular and secular life, in the particular point which forms the subject-matter of this treatise.

That there are distinct vocations in the spiritual life is a truth, which, long obscured, if not wholly lost of late years, is growing more and more on the English mind. It is being understood that in order to be a true member of a Religious Community, it is not enough to possess devotional ardour and zeal in works of mercy; that besides and beyond such necessary qualifications, there is required a distinct inward setting apart by God's Holy Spirit; drawings and dispositions of soul which express themselves more and more clearly as they are tested, by a disinclination for ordinary intercourse with the world and domestic life, not out of moroseness or from disappointment, but for the sake of the more entire consecration of the soul to purely spiritual things. It may not be, as it ought not to be, that there is the very least desire or thought to disparage such intercourse with the world, whether of duty or pleasure, more especially not to think less *of the* sacredness and precious joys of home *ties and obli*gations; but while fully recognising

the Divine order involved in such aims and responsibilities, there is, in one so called, the ever-growing and deepening tendency, more and more settling into a stedfast conviction, to feel that such aims and ties, however holy and necessary, are not God's will for one's self, cannot constitute the sphere in which one's own life is intended to be cast, one's own power of usefulness fulfilled, one's own highest happiness attained. It may be most surely without any diminution of love towards relations, and with a keen sense still acknowledged of the pure delights of home, that such drawings and dispositions are experienced; but in the midst of all, and spite of all, that ordinarily absorbs and satisfies the soul's cravings, the voice is still heard calling, the beckoning hand still seen bidding one depart.

To a mind thus directed and inspired (for what is thus felt is nothing less than a very interposition of the Hand of God, moulding the interior life and shaping its destinies, the Holy Spirit's secret breathings and promptings, though veiled under the natural workings of the mind and heart itself), everything of the outer world, however dear and beautiful, pales before the vision that ever grows in intensity and distinctness, covering by degrees the whole field of life. To part with the world, to separate even from those nearest and dearest, becomes, however painful, a necessity to the soul's consciousness, even though it be to interpose between one's self and them a barrier which cannot ever be broken down in this world; *a separation which* may indeed admit of occasional *intercourse and* freedom of communication, yet

unavoidably becomes the opening out of a new world of sympathies and interests, of tastes and responsibilities, which must completely change the wonted current of the life; involving a practical estrangement to be felt more and more as life runs on, though love may remain as of old, and all past aspirations be still even deeply cherished.

Such distinctive tendencies are now too frequently exhibited under various forms, too certainly tested by time and experience, to be ignored. Nor can any reasonable doubt remain, that they are incapable of being explained as mere external or accidental influences, though outward circumstances give occasion to their development and practical realisation; that their only adequate interpretation is, that they are manifestations of the same creative and all-disposing Mind which first called out the Apostles from their several positions in the world, and has ever since preserved in the kingdom of grace distinctions of order and of spiritual gifts, to perfect the Body of Christ through the Spirit, even as He "divideth to every man severally as He will."

But while there are these marked and ineradicable distinctions between the holiest life in the world and the creation which finds its proper home in a Religious Community, it is not to be supposed that the roots out of which the two growths spring are different; that there are not underlying both manifestations of the Spirit, similar principles, though assuming diverse shapes and features in *many essential* respects, and forming the occasion *of distinct* laws and rules of perfection.

Of all the principles thus connecting the two spheres of spiritual life, none is more characteristic or more vitally influential, than that which forms the subject-matter of this Treatise. For the surrender of self, not in outward act only, but also in inward conformity of will, is the groundwork of obedience, of patience under trial, of the sweetness of pure conversation, of gentleness and love under provocation, equally in the world and the home as in a Religious Community. It is one of the special blessings of this latter form of life, that it subjects its votaries to a discipline of self unknown in other vocations, which by its interior rules and constant calls to subordination reaches even to the inward spirit, to the intellect and the senses; for Religious Rule presses not only on all the outgoings of life, but also on its internal workings, the searching process of its training tending to bring every thought and desire into captivity as matters of distinct conscientious obligation, even in respect of tendencies and choices which are necessarily left perfectly free in other forms of life. It is indeed this principle in constant practical operation that gives to the Religious Life its distinctive characteristic of obedience, as a fruitful means of spiritual perfection.

But it is not therefore to be supposed that any true follower of Christ, aiming at a perfect conformity of will, may not in any sphere of life lay upon himself, as a voluntary discipline, a rule of self-abnegation, of the captive spirit of interior subjection, or poverty of will, to be kept as earnestly, though it be not *sealed by a visible* consecration.

And to practise a perfect life in the sanctities of home and amid worldly occupations, depends on the same secret law which makes the true Religious, who attains the fulness of his union with his Lord in proportion as self is immolated and laid low at the foot of the Cross, after the example of His perfect sacrifice.

Such a disposition, therefore, is of primary importance in testing a desire for a Religious Life, and forms one of the surest guarantees of a true vocation. The important truth may serve to encourage those who, called, as they believe, to such a life, are restrained from seeking admission into it by unavoidable hindrances pressing, it may be, for an indefinite time. To such persons it is often a sore trial to suppose that the time of waiting is lost; that all preparations for the life so greatly desired must necessarily be delayed till they can enter on a specific training. In many details that constitute the Religious state this doubtless is true. But to suppose that the soul's progress towards the longed-for end may not be most surely furthered by a faithful submission of the will to the yoke laid upon it, and to the many calls for self-sacrifice which accompany it, till the time of waiting is past, would be to mistake the very principle of the discipline of the soul. That there are courses of religious instruction and specific habits of life, which properly belong only to the sphere of Religious Communities, is but to repeat the fact already assumed, of distinctive vocations in the kingdom of grace. But if self-sacrifice for the love of Jesus be the underlying groundwork of all true

preparations of the heart, then surely the trials of home and the exactions of the world may be used so as to further this end. There is a ceaseless call for self-surrender in the common round and the daily routine to one set on attaining this high state, in a sweet compliance with ordinary difficulties, in loving, patient, persevering yielding to the continual demands for forbearance or sympathy, such as everyday life in every station ensures, which, accepted in faith and self-forgetfulness, will be found to have produced, by the Grace of God, not only present peace, but an ever-deepening spirituality, and to have secured in a grace most difficult of attainment a preparedness of heart for the Religious Life.

There are cases, perhaps the saddest one ever meets with among the phenomena of the spiritual life, of persons, ardent and enthusiastic, feeding on visions of heavenly things, which a diseased fancy ever luxuriantly suggests, sustaining themselves on self-exalting dreams of spiritual superiority to all around them, restless and dissatisfied with all at home and in the world around, thinking that they have only to escape from the irksome trammels of their enforced compliance with such a state, to make sure of uncloying happiness and easy self-improvement under Religious rule; who have to learn that the cause of their home difficulty and murmurings of heart was really nothing else than an undisciplined and selfish nature, which only the more strikingly reveals itself when brought into contact with the profound practical truths and *unsparing demands* by which, in a religious obed-

ience, every impulse must be met, and each fond dream tested.

And here, again, we may learn the answer to be given—and the cases to which it applies are not uncommon—to those who, earnest and true in their appointed course of life, yet fear continually lest they are falling short of the glory shed around a lot wholly devoted to Religion, because their time and zeal are consumed in such trifling details and common incidents, with such scant, irregular, and interrupted opportunities of devotion, and with the prospect of the same apparently trivial aims filling up the whole earthly future of their lives. It would be beyond our present object to enter into explanations necessary to determine the relative value of different vocations in the kingdom of God; but it will surely help such persons to realize the truth that it is not so much the subject-matter as the spirit and inner law of life that constitutes its perfection.

There is an intended rivalry in a holy family life and that of a Religious Community. It is of God's ordering, in the dispensation of this present world, that Christ is to be served in both states of life, and that a perfect following of His Example is open to His true disciples according as He leads them to follow Him in one or the other manifestations of His Will. They are the counterpart to each other in the complex representations of His Mind, and if His Grace work according to His purpose, they would act and react on each other for mutual benefit, and for the greater glory of our Lord; stimulating *and encouraging* each other to greater faithfulness *in their separate* vocations.

The will of our Lord must necessarily be the determining rule for any choice in life, and His call the seal of its absolute obligation to the soul. To every one whom He calls the highest aim is open, though the way of perfection is more direct and free as the vocation is more or less openly dedicated to His service; but in every case, however seemingly adverse or uncongenial to the soul's secret aspirations, the love of God and the stedfast conformity with His Will is the one law of all true perfection, and the emptying of self, the completeness of self-renunciation, the one necessary condition of all true advances in divine love and the imitation of Jesus; so none need fear lest he should fail or fall short in the race which is set before us if he can say of a truth, "I no longer live unto myself, but unto Him Who died for me and rose again."

No spiritual writer more strictly or in greater fulness of detail sets before the soul this great principle of spiritual self-sacrifice than the author of this Treatise, and in the earnest hope that his counsels and exhortations may, with the blessing of God, extend and deepen among us this primary law of life, the undersigned ventures to commend this work to those desirous of serving God "in spirit and in truth."

T. T. C.

CLEWER RECTORY, *Christmas-tide* 1871.

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SELF-RENUNCIATION.

I.

Self-Surrender the only Path to Perfection.

WELL may he who contemplates his own intrinsic weakness and misery, as opposed to the perfection set before him by God as his aim, cry out with Job, "My soul is weary of my life!" But he must not stop there, or suffer his gaze to dwell on anything short of that Example Which men might scarce dare hope to follow but for the gracious words, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father Which is in Heaven is perfect." And as we gaze on that Example, we cannot fail to perceive that our Blessed Lord set before us a model of the most absolute self-surrender, active and passive, in His ceaseless toil for the accomplishment of His "Father's business;" and in His long-suffering and patience under every most bitter form of agony, mental and bodily, which consumed Him from Bethlehem to Calvary, for man's salvation and His Father's Glory.

"I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you,"[1] and accordingly, each in our measure, we must strive to offer up our whole

[1] John xiii. 15.

being in entire self-surrender to God, remembering that therein we do but give Him that which is His.

One most important point in this subject is duly to bear in mind that it is not in great matters only that we are continually to offer ourselves for the Glory of God. The trifles of daily life often tend to promote that as much or more than those rare events wherein He may call some favoured servants to magnify His Holy Name. He would have us offer ourselves a living sacrifice to Him, and in no wise can that be done save by dying daily to self, and thus continually drawing nearer to Him. God's Glory and forgetfulness of self—such must be the aim of all true spiritual life. God is "a consuming fire," and we offer our bodies a living sacrifice to that fire when they become "holy, acceptable unto God," "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,"[1] through duly regulated mortification of the senses. Our speech is offered to Him when we give heed that all our conversation be to His Glory; which in truth is no light matter, for the tongue, that "little member, whereby we bless God the Father, and curse men which are made after His similitude,"[2] has an infinite power for good or evil, according to the use we make of it. God has given us the faculty of speech to be used in His service, but we too often misuse it by mere frivolous, or worse still, profane and sinful talk, neglecting S. Peter's admonition, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," and letting our conversation savour more of that "deadly poison" with which S. James tells us it is filled. Our time is

[1] *2 Cor. iv. 10.* [2] James iii. 9.

offered to Him by means of a jealous watchfulness that we waste it not in undue care for the creature. Too often we lavish time on all that concerns the things of this life, while we give it grudgingly and sparingly to God, as though the surplus were enough for Him, when we are weary of the things of this world. Is it not sadly true that men who have time and to spare for all the interests and pleasures of this life, find none for what concerns God and their souls? "Redeem the time, because the days are evil." Yet, further, we offer up our life to God's Glory when every action, however trifling, is performed for His sake. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God." But many spiritual persons who aim at seeking Him in their weightier duties and occupations, fail also to aim at constant recollection in the multitude of trifles which make up their daily life. True surrender of self implies a continual seeking after God, desiring Him, meditating on Him, until every impulse of the heart turns to Him with King David's cry, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His Holy Name."

There is also a passive surrender to God, which lies chiefly in a loving acceptance of whatever He may lay upon us. All through life the body tends gradually to decay—natural infirmity, unforeseen accident and disease, the gradual advance of age —all these waste our strength, and demand of us a continual sacrifice, whether we will or no. "As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, *so* man lieth down and riseth not; . . . *the* waters wear the stones, Thou washest

away the things which grow out of the dust, and Thou destroyest the hope of men." To such inevitable sacrifices we must submit humbly and willingly, asking nothing save that our Dear Lord's Glory may be set forth in our infirmity, crying out with faithful Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," calmly awaiting the time when we must lay down our mortal frame "as a garment that is moth-eaten." Yet how many men struggle and rebel against His Hand when it presses on them in bodily suffering!

Our views for the future must also be wholly offered up to God. A man may have chosen very holy excellent works for himself, and may think to do great things for God's Glory, and then all his plans are overthrown; he becomes, it may be, incapable of doing anything, or circumstances entangle him in a multitude of seemingly petty vexatious duties from which there is no escape. Then is the moment for true self-surrender, and he who has attained thereto will rest content to give up all his own plans for the disposal of his time. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power."

Another form of passive self-surrender is when the inner man is tried by the loss of spiritual consolations, by spiritual blindness and incapacity. This must be met with calm trusting endurance. Dryness, uneasiness, desolation, darkness, in which the soul is led to cry out, "Thou hast even consumed me by means of Thy heavy Hand"—all must be borne patiently, while He does as seems *good in His Wisdom*. But how much more common

is it to find even religious men, who look upon suffering as a thing to be averted at all risks, fretting under the contradiction of their plans and hopes, and yielding to depression and murmur when God tries them. This is not true self-surrender.

One would think that if God's Glory was not sufficient inducement to seek such a spirit of self-sacrifice, a real knowledge of our own interest would lead to it. He made us and fashioned us, and all that we have and are tends to Him, our Creator and Centre, as waters flow on to the sea. He made us that we might dwell with Him for ever in Heaven, and ought not our brief life to be spent in loving co-operation with His great Mercy? Our Dear Lord became Man, uniting the Eternal Word to our Humanity, for God's Glory; He is our Perfect Example, and if we would tread in His Steps, we too must strive to offer ourselves with Him, a perpetual oblation to God, Whose children we are. Is it not a marvellous thing, that He, the Almighty and Omniscient, should accept our poor service? that such as we are should be able to add one ray to His Crown of light, or to do Him honour by anything we can do? Is it not wondrous that He should deign to take pleasure in a word, a thought, even a prayerful sigh, of us His poor weak children? Can we really promote God's Glory? And if we have such a power, should we not seek eagerly to use it, thereby associating ourselves with the Angelic hosts, which ceaselessly worship and adore Him? Is it worth while to eat, drink, and sleep, to toil *and fret* for the mere perishing things of this *life, when we may* devote all our energies, all our

time, all our thoughts, to our blessed home in Eternity, and to God's Glory? Bear in mind that He deigns to accept all, even our most trifling actions; nothing is too worthless to be offered to Him, nothing is really unimportant since we can serve Him thereby. Such thoughts as these would surely make all earthly and human aims seem of little value, while they invest the smallest things with dignity and beauty, when seen in the Light of His Glory, for which they are done. Examine your own heart. Is there not a perpetual craving for God within it? does not the silent longing of your whole being reach up ever more and more to Him, your Creator, your Life, while all else fails to fill and satisfy you? This yearning is God's Gift to draw His creatures to Himself. He has made the soul of man so that he cannot find true satisfaction in aught save Him; and the faithful soul will express the inward craving in outward acts, striving to do all things in and for Him. Body and soul, heart and mind, every sense and every faculty, should bear the stamp of self-surrender to Him after Whom His children yearn, knowing, as S. Augustine says, that they are made for Him, and can find no rest save in Him. What have we to do in this world but to seek and find Him? All else is unreal, or at best but a means to this end; yet men live as though this life were all, as though soul and body alike could find rest in those things which pass away while we reach out after them. Be assured there is no happiness to be found on *earth save in God*, and in a complete loving *surrender of self to Him*.

We are ready enough to grant the general theory—it is in the practical application that we fail—shrinking from what is involved; yet, if we really believe in the shortness of time and the nearness of Eternity, we might well give up every instant to seek our Lord and His Glory. "Let us work while it is day," let us press onwards, striving that every hour, every step may bring us nearer to Him, "for the night cometh, when no man can work." Most men are ready to give up time, thought, strength for earthly things, which, if they do not leave us, we ourselves soon must leave. Cannot we do as much for God, Who will never leave us? Will His servants do less for Him than men of the world are willing to do for their master? If such worldly men slight God's claims, shall we not remember them? Ought we not rather to strive and make our lives a continual act of reparation and love? "All things pass away like a shadow," and soon we shall return to Him Who sent us here for His Glory and Worship. May His Holy Name be so deeply stamped on our whole being, that we may find our rest and joy therein, and that, kindled with His Love, we may be wholly consumed, a willing sacrifice to His Glory.

II.

The Groundwork of Sanctification.

"*Blessed is the man that heareth Me.*"—PROV. viii. 34.

THERE are doubtless many ways of seeking after perfection, and innumerable rules and precepts have been laid down to that end, amid which we too often find souls wandering fruitlessly, as S. Paul says, "ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth." One great error into which they fall is that of supposing the way to perfection to be something altogether apart from ordinary life and its duties, and consequently to be attained by unusual extraordinary means. But this is very far from being the case; as a general rule the best and truest way of seeking perfection is that which is simplest and most straightforward. God has so willed it, that no one may count it as beyond his reach, or excuse himself for not aiming after holiness because of its difficulty. There are three things which are the groundwork of all perfection, and which are attainable by all who will seek them stedfastly. These are, first, a calm exterior; second, a quiet heart; and third, simplicity in our dealings with God.

And first of all, with respect to outward calmness. Have you ever considered that composure

in action and in conversation is a means towards real holiness, or have you looked upon all such external restraint as beneath your attention, and only required by minds of inferior stamp? But sanctification lies in being brought into the captivity of grace, in stedfast recollection, and a diligent service of God—and all these habits are fostered by external composure and watchfulness.

A calm spirit brings the whole man into a state of holy captivity, for whereas our mind is independent, and our thoughts wander at large whither they please, our will choosing and rejecting, and our body acting as we like—so the captivity of grace controls this freedom, enthralling the understanding by its attractions until every thought becomes subject thereto; conquering the will until it can love nought save God, and governing the body, which ceases to act from mere natural impulse, being wholly ruled by the inner law and spirit of grace. This captivity is, in truth, a consummation of grace, annihilating the self-pleasing action of the soul, and reducing it wholly to a state of subjection: it is a continual sacrifice to God, regulating every motion of the body and will, a martyrdom of all natural impulses, a pure offering, whereby "Christ is magnified in my body."[1]

Such external composure is a great help to interior recollection. Of course, it is true that a recollected mind tends to produce external tranquillity, but it is no less true that habitual external calmness *and* self-control do gradually promote

[1] Phil. i. 20.

interior recollection, and those who would lead a hidden life must cultivate a calm unruffled demeanour in outward things. There are persons who have a naturally cold, unimpressionable manner; but this is quite a thing apart. I am speaking of a quiet even manner to be acquired even by those whose temperament is hasty and excitable, and by which considerable progress in recollection may be made. Most men's natural impulse is to be vehement and unrestrained; if then a man becomes habitually calm and self-controlled at all times and under all circumstances, in his words and actions alike, we may safely affirm that he is influenced by inward principles which check unruly nature, and that his external composure both springs from and contributes to his soul's peace. This outward self-restraint is a thing which depends very much upon your own will, and you may be sure that it is a delusion to suppose that you can ever attain any great degree of inward recollection while your outward life is uncontrolled and impulsive. Recollection is essentially a thing of rule and order, speedily disturbed by the slightest laxity or dissipation; and those who would come close to God must, thus far at least, "come forth and be separate" from the things of the world and of sense.

The thought, too, that we are acting for God and serving Him, should give a calm dignity to our outward movements. How reverently the blessed Angels, "sent forth to minister," perform their appointed tasks! Think of their ministry to our Blessed Lord in the wilderness and in the Garden *of Gethsemane*; and we too, in our measure, are

ministering to Him in all that obedience lays upon us. If, then, we duly reflect what it is to serve God, we shall not be content to give Him anything short of a thorough service of body and soul, and a calm, self-possessed exterior is as essential to this as it is to our sanctification.

The second point to be attained is more difficult, and yet almost every one would grant its necessity. Who is there whose heart is free from anxiety in holy things? Do not trifles often disturb you as much as greater matters? and is it not a very special act to learn how to attain real tranquillity and moderation of mind? To this end let us examine what it is that most commonly disturbs the heart, how to calm such disturbance, and obtain the blessing of a tranquil heart.

First of all, then, one frequent source of disturbance is that we suffer our hearts to wander too freely—we throw ourselves into outer interests with an absorbing eagerness, which inevitably puts an end to all peace and calm. Or again, we form ill-regulated attachments to earthly things which are incapable of giving any true satisfaction and rest, but rather tend to enslave and perplex us; or we yield to the seductions of the senses, which inevitably entangle the heart in a multitude of exciting influences. Over-anxiety for the approbation of our fellow-men is another common cause of disturbance. How can he be at rest who is engaged in perpetual self-contemplation, and weary striving after that praise of man which is so doubtful a benefit *when* won, and so easily lost? An eager *longing after* success, or anxiety to prove our own

wisdom and judgment, tends also to produce restlessness and perplexity of heart. Now, how are these various hindrances to be dealt with?

First of all by a steady rule and mastery over self and all its impulses, and by a lofty aim which averts the lowering tendency of earthly contact, and keeps our gaze fixed above the pettiness and darkness of this life's interests. If your soul is habitually fixed on Heaven and the things of God, it will sit very loose to the things of this life, passing through them and fulfilling all needful duties without being absorbed or captivated by them; untrammelled by the world's perplexities, the sound of which scarcely penetrates within that higher spiritual atmosphere in which you will live. Herein lies real peace of mind and true detachment. The soul that has learnt to stay itself upon God does not care to risk the loss of such heavenly rest for the turmoil of this world's interests, and with the aid of His Grace it fulfils all needful exterior avocations without being soiled or disturbed by their contact. Those who attain to this habit of mind will be able to lead the busiest life without anxiety or restlessness, calmly plying their daily tasks in the world, while their heart abides in its inner retirement with God.

The second means by which you may attain to this quietness of heart is by not desiring human approbation. Nothing is so disquieting or so tends to corrupt the soul as that vain longing after the praise of men which besets so many people. Examine yourself, and if you are subject to this failing, *strive earnestly to* conquer it. Our Lord has told

us that the judgment of God is not as man's judgment, and if you would rest in His favour, you must overcome all vain desires for earthly praise. Men see the outside only, He judges the heart, and without His approbation His servants can know no peace.

The third means whereby to attain a quiet heart is to leave the result of all you do to God. Yours be it to make use of whatever means are most suited to the desired object; but having done this, rest content, the issue and result is wholly and solely God's; leave Him to bring to pass whatever may be His Holy Will. "The whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."[1] Before you can acquire a thoroughly tranquil heart, you must learn to care but little for the consequences of what you do, leaving all such matters to God; labouring to the best of your ability for Him, and being perfectly satisfied that He should grant success or failure as He sees fit. If you can work in this spirit, you will never be troubled, whether your endeavours are crowned with success, or if on the other hand you meet only with apparent failure.

Moreover, is it not a fact that whenever you are disturbed and eager your work is apt to fail, and that because an agitated heart and mind lack self-control and vigour? Confusion and hurry react upon all we do. Nor will God's Holy Spirit ever abide within you, unless your heart is prepared to be a calm untroubled dwelling-place for Him. But with those who have indeed made ready to receive Him in peaceful trust, He will come and dwell in

[1] Prov. xvi. 33.

love and joy; and great is their rest and blessedness.

But I said further, that simplicity in our dealings with God is necessary to the attainment of sanctification. Now, this consists first in familiar intercourse with Him, such as that of friend with friend, or of a child with a tender parent; and secondly, in a certain inward singleness of heart, which knows but one aim and object—God. Even in prayer it is necessary to observe this rule. The soul is often distracted and perplexed by making continual acts of self-oblation, by an excessive multiplicity of petitions, and by the attempt to make too many separate acts. Now these distractions must be met by simplicity. Of course, generally speaking, we are all taught by the Church to make repeated acts of devotion, of self-oblation, and of humble petition. These are to be made in order and peacefulness of spirit. Souls are sometimes led also by the Holy Spirit to seek God without such specific acts, Himself directing their desires by the hidden power of His Grace. In either case I would say, Remember that ordinarily he who makes an offering assumes that he possesses that which he offers, whereas you have nought, you can claim no possession, except what God gives. Therefore be content with casting yourself at His Feet, as a simple act of rendering to Him that which is His. Leave all to Him, asking that He may mould you, as a potter the clay beneath his hands, and believing that the grace of such entire dependence upon God is worth more than all *sacrifice and oblation.*

Neither should you ask unconditionally or presumptuously for any gifts, however convinced you may be of their necessity and value. In truth, we often know not what we ask: rather let the Holy Spirit, "Who knoweth our necessities," ask and give whatsoever you need. This is what S. Paul means when he tells us that "we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And he goes on to say, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the Saints according to the Will of God."[1]

Lastly, do not labour painfully and wearily after a formal mechanical performance of righteousness; such preoccupation and so many distracting cares deprive the soul of freedom and full capacity to receive God's Grace, which will work more abundantly in you if you are found plastic in His Hands, without personal choice or self-will. Do you ask, "Am I to leave off all efforts to attain to virtue?" Assuredly not; but I would have you bear in mind that there are two things to be heeded —what you do yourself, and what the Holy Spirit does in you. Your sole care should be to maintain a recollected spirit of love, reverence and submission to His Holy Will, while in His Own good time He will teach you what He wills you should do or leave undone. Be sure that there is no time or place wherein His Gracious Voice is silent. The willing ear can hear its continual whisper, "Restrain *this* word, retrench that indulgence, do

[1] Rom. viii. 26, 27.

not speak so eagerly, be more guarded, more watchful, beware lest thy heart stray from God." That loving Spirit is for ever moulding our souls by the secret motions of grace, condescending to influence even our most trivial actions. "He hath made the small and great, and careth for all alike."[1] Do you not realise this truth every hour of your life? And what can you do in return save to obey the Divine promptings quickly and faithfully? But in order to this you must not distract your mind with the attempt to attend to too many things. God's Holy Spirit will supply you with guidance as to what should be done or left undone as you need it, and your part is to strive after a recollected mind, ready to obey all His inspirations faithfully. "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father Which speaketh in you."[2]

Finally, if you would attain this holy recollection, remember the Prophet's words, "Rest, and be still."[3] Seek to check all excessive eagerness, and if you must act, strive that your actions may tend to quiet rather than stimulate the fire of natural activity. Remember, too, what S. Paul says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God;"[4] and, "I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Give yourself up wholly to the leadings of His Grace; simple obedience is your surest path.

But one thing in this life is needful to you—*i.e.*

[1] Wisd. vi. 7. [2] Matt. x. 19, 20.
[3] Jer. xlvii. 6. In the Vulgate it is "Refrigerare, et vile."
[4] *Col. iii. 3.*

a heart stayed wholly on God. Compared with this even the holiest duties are nothing. Surely if any one was ever justified in being cumbered with earthly cares, it was Martha when she received her Lord within her house; and yet He rebuked her carefulness and anxiety, "Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful." And if even in God's service we are not to be over-anxious, how much less ought we to be eager about the common things of life, which are unworthy to disturb a heart made to rest on God alone. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

III.

Sensitiveness.

THERE are many highly spiritual people whose views and habits of life are admirable, but who fall short of a true spirit of mortification through their overweening sensitiveness. Such persons cannot endure the least word of blame, even perhaps of suggestion. A passing word which vexes them, or a trifling injury to their interest or dignity, is sure to bring forth ill-humour, wounded feeling, sharp replies, as though they were to the full as worldly as the most secular of those around; and though such conduct might be excused in those who do not affect any high standard of life, it does infinite mischief when displayed by persons whose professions of piety should raise them above such infirmities.

Now this extreme sensitiveness is specially apt to appear when there is occasion to give a word of counsel, or to make any observation which in the least degree wounds their pride. Superiors know by experience that when such is the case they must needs take the greatest care how they set to work, they must seek a favourable opportunity, and feel their way cautiously; they must consider carefully every word they say, soften down every suggestion, *bring in their* advice as it were casually, for fear of

irritating where they wish to help, and perhaps after all the sensitive man is astonished, vexed, injured, and begins to justify himself eagerly and tenaciously. Or again, in conversation, if a chance word annoys a sensitive man, how ready he is with a sharp or angry retort; how persistently he argues his own cause! Or perhaps he is subjected to some trifling inconvenience, he considers himself slighted or not duly attended to; some office which he dislikes is allotted to him, others are preferred to him, and forthwith his annoyance is made plainly manifest. It is all very well so long as nothing touches him personally, but his patience cannot endure the smallest trial which arouses self.

Of course all pleasure in conversation is gone if it becomes necessary to watch every word we say for fear of offending. One would rather give up all intercourse than carry it on in such a constrained fashion; in truth all freedom and enjoyment is lost with touchy people, who deprive society of that ease and simple courtesy which good sense and good taste alike require. And if we feel this in mere worldly society, how much more intolerable it becomes among those who make a profession of piety, and in whom we expect to find the attraction and edification of a good example? Moreover, such sensitiveness has a special tendency to foster a proud, fastidious, self-absorbed disposition; self-assertion and defence become habitual; he who indulges it never believes himself to be wrong;—always right in his own eyes he resents the kindest advice, the most charitably expressed blame. "The *pride of thine heart* hath deceived thee," as says the

Prophet Jeremiah (xlix. 16). As time goes on thi infirmity waxes stronger, and in spite of his religior he who has yielded to it often becomes vehemen and liable to give way to a most undiscipline temper, so that he is a real hindrance to those whor he ought to edify. Even from a selfish point c view, such sensitiveness is very contemptible, an seems to indicate a narrow weak mind which cannc face even slight difficulties; not to say that a reall truthful, humble man would be glad of kindly advic or warning, and would pass over trifling vexation without dwelling upon them. But, looking at th matter from higher grounds, we may feel sure tha those men whose lives are moulded upon the teacl ing of our Master, of whom men "take knowledg that they have been with Jesus," will have put awa all such unworthy self-conceit, and will have bui the structure of their spiritual life upon holiness an self-renunciation. The longest life of externa observances or abstruse learning is worse than lo time if we do not hold fast to Jesus, and learn H lesson of meekness and gentleness.

He who is perfectly free from all touchiness an overweening sensitiveness is a happy man; advic or even reproof are welcome to him, he meets th petty vexations of daily life with a holy indifferenc he pays no attention to the chance words c thoughtless actions which so sorely wound th touchy man. He is above all such weakness; an indeed, if there were any deliberate intention t annoy or pique him, nothing could so defeat the il natured intention as to see the intended victi *calm and unheeding.* The true Christian, st

more the good Religious, will go further. Such an one will always aim at a perfectly happy intercourse with all around, he will accept the counsels of superiors with love and respect; charity, which "thinketh no evil" and "is not easily offended," prevents him from imagining that any offence is intended; or if it be impossible to shut his eyes to such an intention, he does but grow kinder and gentler towards the offender. He is ready to give way where the interests of those with whom he lives clash with his own, desiring above all things to be in perfect unity and peace with all men. In this way he promotes his own spiritual progress, for such self-abnegation is a death-blow to pride and self-conceit, to restlessness and impatience. Nor does he less promote the edification of others—the world respects an unselfishness it does not care to imitate; superiors are drawn to those who can be so thoroughly relied on, troublesome tempers are won by such even composure and largeness of heart. Depend upon it you may do more good by such forbearance than by the most impressive language. Nothing but recollection and union with God can train you in it. Such a habit of mind makes all well with you; you will see the work of grace in whatever is hard to the natural man, whether it be a superior's command, or an equal's indiscretion; and so becoming more and more detached from all self-love and self-seeking, you will daily advance in the sweet though sharp paths of perfection.

IV.

The Spiritual Man should be ready to sacrifice his Reputation.

SUCH a subject may sound very alarming to a sensitive soul, and in truth you may well be startled and surprised at the suggestion of what is so contrary to all our natural inclinations. Yet in truth it is most necessary for those who would attain a true spirit of mortification to learn how voluntarily to endure condemnation and contempt. We may be harshly condemned—our honour, credit, intellect may be attacked more or less justly, or the severe things said of us may be wholly untrue, arising from malice or a love of foolish talk. Let such depreciation, however, spring from what cause it may, a spiritually-minded man should offer up the pain it costs him to God, bearing it willingly if the blame be just, as a punishment of sin; and if the accusations be false, still accepting all such humiliation cheerfully, and seeking to offer it to God in union with Him Whose spotless Innocence was more cruelly outraged than any of His servants can ever be. There is great risk in refusing to make this sacrifice, and, on the other hand, those who have courage to suffer in this respect with their Master are sure to reap a harvest of blessings.

Let us suppose the case of a religious man

whose reputation is attacked, and who frets under the trial; most likely he will damage himself more than his slanderers have done; vexation and excitement throw him off his balance, he loses his power of self-control, and perhaps his anger and vehemence almost justify the harsh things which have been said of him. If the slanders are anonymous, such a sensitive man will be eager to find out their authors, and thus he will become suspicious, captious, and ready to imagine that every one is inclined to ill-treat him; he passes unjust judgments, has recourse to unworthy means of detecting the source of calumny, makes use of questionable self-defence, retorts, exaggerates, moves heaven and earth to justify himself. He puts himself to more pain than his slanderers inflicted, and probably after all no one believes his self-defence, the very eagerness of which only tends to confirm a belief in the truth of what was said against him. But this is not the worst. Too often the next step is recrimination—the angry man retaliates with accusations no less bitter than those which have aggrieved him, only, as he fancies, he has greater truth on his side, whereas too often he deals out his accusations without an over-strict heed to truth, magnifying every shadow in the conduct of those who offend him, giving substance to what is really but a vague suspicion, recklessly destroying a neighbour's reputation in defence of his own.

The mischief does not stop here; the wrathful tongue embitters the heart—estrangements, dislike, rooted aversions ensue—and all those evils are the *result of a tenacious* love of a man's good name!

Surely it is bad enough that such things should be among men of the world, but after all honour and reputation are their most sensitive points. When, however, those who aim at a highly spiritual life do precisely the same, when we find the same irritation, suspicion, self-defence, and retaliation among them, does it not jar upon us as most inconsistent with their religious profession, and do we not feel scandalised at the discredit thrown upon piety? And yet sometimes religious people are so sensitive to blame that they can scarcely bear it even from their superiors whose duty it is to criticise. Now all these evils arise from the reluctance men feel to make any sacrifice of reputation, even when God requires it as a means of conquering our natural pride. How unlike our Great Example such tenacity of human approbation is, and how unwise we are to lose the opportunity of making so acceptable an offering to God. Other sacrifices may cost as much, but we are sometimes upheld in them by a certain exaltation,—a conscious dignity and grace in our voluntary immolation which sustains us; whereas there is absolutely nothing to uphold and gratify the weakness of human nature in the sacrifice of reputation. All is mean, low, and contemptible both to the sufferer and to the lookers on; there is no food for self-satisfaction, no eye save that of God to approve, and therefore it is that this is one of the most effectual means whereby to grow in holiness. It is "the sacrifice of sanctification."[1]

So long as we hold back anything which God

[1] Ecclus. vii. 31.

requires of us, we cannot delude ourselves into the belief that we are offering a worthy sacrifice, and thus it is vain to suppose that we have given ourselves wholly to Him while we shrink from this sacrifice. Do you strive to be willing to lose the esteem of all men, to be utterly despised, accepting such contempt as your due, welcome it even as precious; do you seek to find positive rest in it—a death to self, and life to God. If you can attain to this, be sure you will find sweetness in the sacrifice even before its intended results have been attained. But in order to practise such renunciation you must learn to desire nothing in this world save God alone, ignoring all earthly treasures, which do but fret and distract the heart. You must learn to seek no other witness of your life and soul than God; to desire no approbation save His, which alone has any true value. If you can attain to this you will be in perfect rest; let men say or do what they will to the detriment of your character, you will not be either elated or depressed by human praise or blame, because you do not measure your real condition by the approbation or contempt of your fellow-creatures; your gaze is fixed solely upon Him Who Alone attracts your soul, Whose approval only you seek.

Would you perfect this sacrifice, and confirm yourself in the mental habit, make it your rule never to justify yourself even when false accusations are heaped upon you. Offer up your silence to God, and therein you will gain rich stores of hidden strength; "*In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.*" Such silence will be a precious

offering in God's Sight; it is almost as difficult at times to bridle the tongue as to give up one's credit. There are only two conditions under which you may not rightly thus abstain from self-justification—namely, when you are questioned by your superiors, and when your neighbour's welfare is concerned. Obedience and charity are more a duty than silence in such cases.

Meantime you will find consolation and encouragement under your sacrifice from the thought that God is on your side. His Lovingkindness will not leave you alone under the burden borne for His sake, He will bear it with you. If you are unjustly accused, it may be that He will bring your innocence to light and expose your slanderers when you least expect it. If you are really guilty, He may spare you further suffering. Anyway be sure that you lose nothing by giving yourself up wholly to God, and that it is your wisest as well as your safest course. Even if you remain under opprobrium in consequence of your voluntary sacrifice, doubt not but that God will reward you hereafter. He appreciates the sacrifice, and will restore it fourfold. He never allows His creatures to exceed Him in generosity, and He will fill your soul with the gift of His Own peace. When any one casts himself wholly upon God, forsaking all earthly consolation, He seems, so to say, eager to meet His servant with His abundant grace, rewarding all losses with an abundant usury, and showing how, in exchange for man's poor empty praise, we have gained God's Own approval, and all the countless tender lovingkindnesses with which *He is wont to soo*the sorrowful souls. Who would

not long to offer all he has to so merciful a God? Who would not grant that they are greatly to be pitied who think more of the passing breath of earthly praise, a doubtful treasure, hardly won and easily lost? Most men are ready to shake off troubles and cares as far as may be. Believe me there is no way of doing this so effectually as by giving up your reputation to God, letting it go as a thing in which you have no concern, putting all your trust in Him "Who will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him." This thoroughly done, you will be set free from all the distracting care we too often bestow on what is but an imaginary good; your rest will be undisturbed, and day by day you will realise more fully that having lost everything you have also gained everything.

V.

The Sentence of Death.

"We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God Which raiseth the dead."—2 COR. i. 9.

NATURAL death is not more an inevitable necessity in passing from time to Eternity than a death to earthly inclinations and passions is for those who would attain to the hidden spiritual life; and so it is that every one who aims at that interior life must realise within himself that "sentence of death" of which S. Paul speaks. He who would tread in the footsteps of Saints must be ready to die their death, which is precious in the Sight of the Lord. Such a death to the things of sense is as entirely part of God's design for His redeemed creatures as physical death became through Adam's sin; and the soul which loves Him evidently must prepare to tread through that shadow, certain that there too, as in the valley of material death, He will be our Guide and Strength.

Now our bodies become subject to death through various material causes—violence, injuries, overwhelming crosses, lack of needful nourishment, or excessive toil or endurance, which exhaust the physical system. So likewise spiritual mortification (*which is another* word for death) implies suffer-

ing of all kinds willingly accepted, and that without any inward consolation from God or man. Nor must it be a mere passive endurance; the soul should aim at offering itself ceaselessly to God. Thus the three principles on which this spiritual death must be founded are—to endure all, to receive nothing, and to do all for God.

Every Christian, even the most easy going, is prepared to grant that suffering is inevitable, but having granted the general proposition we forthwith seek in every way to avoid it in detail. We would avert suffering from this or that quarter, resist it from this or that hand. But such is not our rightful course. Strive rather to give yourself up to accept all crosses, whether they come directly from the Hand of God Himself or indirectly through His creatures. All are alike His instruments, and it is not your part to choose what you will bear or reject. In the same way, if He permits you to be harassed by the devil, by temptations bodily or spiritual, be patient: He uses evil spirits to try us, and they too are His instruments. Moreover, you must resign yourself to the sufferings of which you are the cause to yourself; the secret troubles and distresses which arise from the rebellion of our corrupt nature. But this is not all. After accepting the principle of an unreserved submission some begin to raise fresh difficulties. One man thinks he can endure any physical suffering, but he cannot accept inward temptation; another is prepared to endure this, but he shrinks from bodily pain and weakness; and a third could bear both these forms of trial, but it seems impossible to sit quiet under

the loss of his good name. This, however, is not unqualified submission. You must strive to give yourself up to every possible form of suffering, be it of one kind or another, without any reserve or self-will, leaving all to God, even when "from the sole of the foot unto the head, all is wounds and bruises and sores." Perhaps this step is gained, and you acknowledge that you have no right to choose what sufferings you will accept or reject, but then human nature tries to assert itself in a fresh direction, and revolts against an indefinite prolongation of pain. This victory, too, must be won. You must bring yourself to put away all limits to your endurance, to accept crushing bodily pains, seemingly inexhaustible temptations, total ruin, irretrievable calumny. True death to self knows no self-chosen point at which to stop. You can never safely say, "It is enough."

Then nature tries another refuge—the relief of murmurs and lamentations. But here again you must die to self, by striving to bear your pain silently. Who ever heard a dead man complain? Remember rather that God's chastisements are seldom so heavy as we deserve, and do not cry out eagerly to be delivered from what He lays upon you. Do not be so eager for the compassion of men; you will thereby lose one of the choicest graces of your cross, which is won by silent suffering. Do not be so ready to describe your sufferings in vivid colours to every listener; do not even give way to unrestrained sighs and groans when alone, they are signs that you are yet very far from a real death to self.

There is but one last effort which self can make when all these successive battles have been fought and won—that is satisfaction in the consciousness of our great and admirable endurance. This, too, must be overcome. You must suffer without setting any value upon your sufferings, however great and however patiently borne. To this end, never allow your mind to dwell upon them—that is mere weakness and self-indulgence, which exaggerate everything. Rather let your thoughts dwell upon the far greater crosses which have been borne by so many holy souls, and your own will sink into insignificance; and you will feel ashamed to see how trifling your cross is in comparison with what you deserve. Better still, look out of yourself, and raise your heart to God, and never forget that while resistance cannot avert what He lays upon you, submission will soften every pang, and give you strength and courage to bear all things profitably.

There is another principle of this spiritual death, *i.e.*, to be willing to receive nothing. We are apt to feel as though we had a right by reason of our suffering to all spiritual consolations. Practically every one who suffers expects support and comfort either from God or men. Even the most truly religious are tempted to rest on the belief that sensible support will accompany their trial hour; that they will be sustained through some tangible grace, some conviction of safety, some hidden source of strength, or if from nothing else, at least from the certainty that all trials come from God. But true death to self requires us to be ready to *suffer without any* consolation. This sounds hard,

but are we who bear the cross to look for our own solace under it? God will comfort us as He sees fit, but it is our part to be willing to go without consolations, and, if He pleases, even to bear our trials without any mitigation. Be content to suffer without receiving comfort from your fellow-men. I do not mean that you must never seek or accept any consolation from them, but that if it pleases God to try you with sore distress in which there is no alleviation, you should freely accept the position, especially as regards your fellow-creatures, who for the most part are incapable of giving any real comfort, either because they set to work the wrong way, not really understanding your grief, or because that grief is too deeply seated to be reached by their weak hand. In truth, the hidden sorrows of the soul cannot be soothed by any save Him Who lays them on us, and there are few who have not felt at times that human comfort was more hindering than helping. Whether this be so or not, we must accept the privation meekly, if God chooses that our course of sorrow be lonely. "The wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall be dry, and his fountain shall be dried up; He shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels."[1] Even if He gives us earthly comforters, their very best can do but little for those on whom God's Hand is pressing.

It is harder still to resign yourself to do without any immediate consolation from God, and yet it may be that He will have it so. What are we that He should deign to visit us? Or how dare we,

[1] Hosea xiii. 15.

knowing what we are, look for such grace at His Hand? Surely the consciousness of our own unworthiness ought to make us patient under privation of His consolations. How dare such as I am ask Him to stoop to my misery? "Behold He taketh away, who can hinder Him? who will say unto Him, What doest Thou? . . . Thou art not a man as I am that I should answer Thee."[1] Further, you must give yourself up to do without one ray of light amid your thickest darkness, believing that such often is the path of faith ("I have made my bed in the darkness"[2]), and that the soul may walk therein with greater security than in the broad light of day, because earthly shadows do not interfere, but God carries out His own work undisturbed. Be sure that whatever comfort you might receive by such extraneous light would be worthless, as compared to the real gain of the darkness if God so appoint for you.

Nay, even amid the sharpest agonies of soul, you must be ready to do without the sensible consolations of grace, willingly renouncing them as taking off the bloom of a pure unreserved sacrifice of self, and binding down the soul to imperfect surrender of will. Do you strive even to prefer your unalleviated pain, training yourself to be very watchful against a self-indulgent desire for any mitigation. If strange perplexities of conscience come upon you, resign yourself to be left without inward assurance as to your spiritual condition, and learn to stand full of awe before God, without any cowardly impatience to escape at once from fear into the

[1] *Job ix. 12, 32.* [2] Job xvii. 13.

soothing rest of His Love. This is a point in the hidden life too often neglected. We ought to cling to God in His terrors as well as in His Loving-kindness, delighting to pay Him the homage of holy fear in addition to that of perfect love.

Further, amid the searching pains and desolations which at times sweep away all sensible comfort, resign yourself to do without the secret strength which arises from the thought that you are God's. Christ says, "Whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it;" and you must learn to love the total loss of self, because thereby you will find a new and far more blessed self in God, although now you cannot understand either the loss or the recovery. But you do know that to find God is worth all other loss.

Finally, if you have thought to find comfort in the remembrance that God sees you, offer up this consolation too, reminding yourself that you are unworthy of His glance or attention, you who are nought and less than nought. This will put the last stroke to your self-sacrifice. But be sure you will lose nothing by thus laying your soul before God in all simplicity, asking no consolation from any source whatever. He sees your ready offering, He fathoms the depths of your renunciation, and you are more acceptable to Him thus, than when overflowing with spiritual delights. Surely you need ask no more than that He should be satisfied, and accept your service as faithful?

We have seen how much courage you need to suffer, still more to suffer without consolation; but *there is one* step harder still,—to do all this for

God's sake Only. Great suffering induces a sort of torpor, as though suffering justified us in remaining passive. But he who would give himself wholly to God must rise out of himself, and give the last deathblow to nature by still doing everything for God—consuming and pouring himself out for Him Who is our Maker and Author, giving back, as it were, the gift He gave. Such an unquestioning submission, which asks no palliation, yet strives to serve God to the last breath, is indeed the fulfilment of St. Paul's precept, and he who attains to it will "not trust in himself, but in God, Which raiseth the dead."

VI.

Of the Importance of Little Things.

"*He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.*"—LUKE xvi. 10.

ALL the external details of a holy life may be divided into great and little things. We are wont to class among the first such good works as meet the eye—the conversion of souls, teaching and preaching, visiting prisons and hospitals, founding charitable institutions; also great fervour in religious exercises, unsparing fatigue in promoting the Glory of God, or unwonted austerity.

Then there are what we call little things, such as punctuality, modesty, watchfulness over the senses, diligent observance of rule, perfect obedience; a gentle voice, even a staid habit of moving, of sitting, the power of keeping from restlessness, of shutting doors quietly, and numberless similar trifles. Now, most people think a great deal of those greater matters, while they neither prize nor practise those which they call little things: not unfrequently indeed we hear those who study such trifles accused of narrow minds or excessive scruple. But it is a great mistake to fancy that attention to trifles in the spiritual life is unnecessary, or that God's Glory is *only promoted in* great things: it is often harder to

serve Him well in seeming trifles than in those we call great.

It requires far more vigour and energy to conquer one's self in little things than in some great matter, which, occurring perhaps but once in a lifetime, calls forth all one's courage and resolution, whereas little things are continually pressing on us, requiring a sustained effort. Punctuality, self-possession, modesty, are equally duties at all times, and there is no dignity or excitement about them to carry us over a difficulty. Then, again, there is but little external help in the victory we obtain in such matters; there is neither credit nor fame to be won by them, while the more showy external works are known and praised of men. Besides, there is a great deal of weariness and vexation attending a diligent perseverance in these seemingly trifling matters. It is weary work to be always trying to avoid hasty movements and wandering glances, to keep watch over our tongue, and practise strict self-control in a number of minute details; there is nothing to gratify self-love in such petty aims. It is far harder to bear than to act, and thus a holy man hath said that "endurance is the perfection of strength."[1]

Great occasions of conquering self are rare, real persecutions, profound humiliations, excessive toil or privation come but rarely, and do not involve such entire subjugation of self-will as the never-ending daily duties of a Christian life. Accordingly we find people who have achieved some hard thing giving way weakly under trifles; ready to perform great *external* works, but incapable of enduring a

[1] "*Passio est* consummatio fortitudinis."—Amb. l. 5, in Luc.

life of rule ; practising severe bodily austerities, but giving undue license to their tongue ; bearing real persecution, but keenly sensitive to a sharp word. Such persons may go bravely through severe temptations, and fall helplessly under some trifling assault ; they will dream great things of all they would bear, even to death, for God's sake, thereby fostering vanity and self-conceit ; and all the while they cannot put up with a disagreeable remark. No doubt it is easier to make one rare great effort than to keep up the ceaseless struggle against self involved in what are called little things.

Some persons, again, will restrain themselves for a while with some great object in view, deliberately intending to relax when that is won ; but real self-mortification is perpetual and knows no limit—its sincerity lies just in that very fact, and in the necessity for bringing every movement of the heart and of the body into captivity. There must not be an unguarded look or word, not a hasty act, not a trivial self-indulgence, not an unchastened joy, not an impulse of mere feeling. Such captivity to the law of Christ is surely harder than the temporary effort required for some great deed, and the victory is more glorious.

Again, our truest victory is ever to be found where there is the truest humiliation, and that assuredly is to be exercised more in little things than in greater ones. The world sees nothing of those hidden victories over self, those angry words restrained, those passions and emotions subjected to grace, that firm rule kept over natural tastes and *inclinations.* Human respect and the love of

praise do not reach here, and yet here it is that you "die daily," that you are "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." God only witnesses your struggles with self, and thus natural vanity, which always yearns for the praise of men, is defeated and crushed. They are but few who are honestly indifferent to the opinion of their fellow-creatures, and who can disregard the praise bestowed upon visible good works.

Another reason why humility is fostered by victory over self in little things, is that one is scarcely conscious of doing anything for God in what seems so trifling; one hardly believes that He can deign to notice such little things, whereas great works seen and known of men are too likely to carry the insidious poison of self-satisfaction in their rear, filling us with a pleasant impression of our own merits and importance as compared with others. Even great austerities have sometimes a tendency to foster this spirit of self-commendation, whereas nothing so crushes and destroys it as a hidden life of lowly duties, unseen, unthought of by men.

A second point for consideration is that we set forth God's Glory more truly in little things than in great. In great works there is often a temptation to be attracted by something other than the thought of God only. The outer side of the work has an unconscious influence—to be known as a great preacher and widely sought director, the fame of a Mission, the repute of conspicuous good works—all such things have a tendency to absorb the heart to *the damage of* God's Glory, nay, even at times to

exclude that as the motive power. Then men become engrossed in the work itself, its failure or success, or at best their interest is divided, the world has a large share in all they do, and thus good works are often spoilt and hindered. But when a man is stedfast in conquering himself in little things, simply in order to please God, such a single aim, and the detachment which comes therewith, is a real true offering to Him, and surely promotes His Glory.

Again, in the matter of offerings to God. When you abound most in sensible sweetness, do you not offer Him merely that which He is giving to you? Does not the exuberance of grace leave you little to do of yourself? And we know that He always gives such extra supplies of grace when we are called to great and difficult undertakings, in order to kindle our fervour and strengthen our will, so that we may not be disheartened or backward. Thus when the strain on nature would be excessive, God's Grace supplies our deficiency, especially where the welfare of souls is affected by our weakness, and thus sometimes we see persons of no very remarkable capacity able to do great works. But in ordinary matters this extra supply of grace is not given us, and then our efforts are more our own, we have to work hard in all we do, and nothing so enhances the value of an offering as the labour we have bestowed upon it.

Then, too, we very specially sacrifice our liberty to God in little things, because from their whole nature they become a bondage, scarcely leaving us time to breathe, which is not the case with rarer occasions *of serving* Him. No offering can be more

genuine than that of liberty—other things are from without, but that is from within our very self.

A perfect offering or immolation of thought is another means of glorifying God, and here again we are not apt to think much of the little things we do for His Service; we should almost be ashamed to dwell upon them, but we entertain much higher ideas about our greater works, and are ready enough to flatter ourselves that we are offering Him what all account to be precious. Self-love, too, is immolated, for secondary motives seldom interfere in what we consider such trivial matters, but pride, rather than self-abhorrence, may stimulate great austerity; earnest labour for the conversion of souls may find a motive in the love of success, the able preacher may be prompted by vanity as well as zeal, good works may be sustained by excitement rather than by spiritual earnestness. Those actions are most heartily offered to God which win least of our own self-complacency, or of the applause of men.

From all this, the conclusion is that if you would advance in true holiness, you must aim steadily at perfection in little things, and beware of supposing that you seek God's Glory in anything savouring of display and outward demonstration. Surely whatever such poor, weak creatures as we are can do, must be unworthy of His Majesty before Whom the Angels hide their faces; and he errs grievously who presumes to fancy that he can offer anything meet to be accepted of God. The widow's mite outweighed the Pharisee's gold because of her intention, the real test of what is great or small.

There would be more spiritual life among us if

people attended better to little things. Me
restraint, they like self-indulgence, they court
position, praise, renown, and meanwhile they
the interior life, which requires ceaseless att
to trifles, and to the hidden intricacies of the
God bestows His choicest gifts, whether of i
grace or real success, upon those who are fait
little things. S. Francis Xavier says that m
incapable of doing great works for the salva
other souls, unless their own have been dili
trained in the practice of lowly things.
moreover, God's Own dealings prove the impo
of little things, for sometimes a trifling
unfaithfulness will estrange a soul from Hi
estrangement which may be the first step to
utter reprobation.

VII.

Government of the Tongue.

I AM afraid, it must be confessed, that good people, even Religious Communities, are by no means exempted from those ordinary sins of the tongue which are so general in the world; and that few, if any, are altogether free from the tendency to say slighting things of their neighbours, and to criticise their doings as a matter of course. This is a point upon which we all of us need to be infinitely more watchful than we are. And in saying this I do not mean the unscrupulous slander and downright false-witness which men of the world often employ; what I refer to now is the readiness too many religious people show to say little unkind things of their neighbour, things which may not be altogether untrue, but which are unnecessary, and leave a painful impression. Surely those who aim at the interior life should make it a rule never to say anything, however trivial, which is disadvantageous to their neighbour, and that for their own sake as well as that of others.

It is curious to notice how ready we all are to find an excuse for talking freely of the defects of others, and how little self-restraint we practise in this respect. Some people have a natural inclination *for ridicule and* disparagement; they seek to lead

a holy life, but nevertheless they are continua
discussing their neighbour's weaknesses in
amusing ridiculous way, and because such gossip
acceptable to the listeners, they seem to think
must be harmless. Can it really be right to amu
one's friends at the expense of another, even if
was only done, as may be urged, in fun, or in recre
tion time, or because there was nothing else to ta
about? Some will defend themselves with t
excuse that what they have said was so trivial th
nothing but ill-natured criticism could magnify
into any consequence. Nevertheless, you will fi
that even their passing remarks draw to light son
blemish, or tend to depreciate the person spok
of; the listeners are left with a somewhat less go
opinion of him than before,—and what right ha
we to damage our neighbour's character in any wa
however trifling? Another common excuse f
disparaging remarks is that they were ma
thoughtlessly, and without unkind intention; b
this only proves an unjustifiable carelessness, or
confirmed a habit of evil-speaking that it has becon
almost natural to do so.

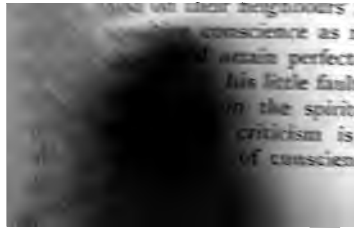
Some people who are always talking of the
neighbours and discussing their infirmities, justi
themselves on the ground that as everybody kno
what they allude to it is no secret. But surely
is a breach of charity to call attention to the faul
of others, confirming the unfavourable opinic
already entertained of them; and, moreover, tl
temptation to be amusing, and give zest to what
say, often leads to exaggeration and embellishmer
It is no answer to say we mean no harm. Is

lawful to *do* harm, with or without meaning it? Another insidious form of evil-speaking is when we talk with apparent pity and compassion of a neighbour's faults, professing great regret, saying that any one might err in the like way, and yet all the while dwelling circumstantially on every detail, holding up every damaging particular, enlarging upon the worst points of the matter, informing every one of the misfortune, all the time with an affectation of interest for the culprit! There is something peculiarly odious in this delight in exhibiting the faults of others. It is as though we caressed our friend with one hand, the better to deal him a blow with the other; and, in truth, such treacherous, unreal compassion is often more injurious than open abuse would be.

Then, again, some people who would think it quite wrong to gossip over their friend's faults in general society, and who are emphatic in condemnation of those who do so, yet make no scruple of endless confidential talk on such matters with this or that individual. It is always a great secret which they would mention to no one else, a thing not to be repeated generally on any account; and meanwhile troubles and scandals which need never be known are dragged to light, and endless mischief done, under the veil of strict confidence. These gossips need to remember that they have no more right to damage a neighbour in the eye of one chosen confidant than of a dozen. "Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment, and a babbler is no better."[1] Other zealous busybodies

[1] Eccles. x. 11.





aracteristic of holy souls. Such souls shrink om the slightest shadow of impurity, and seek hide themselves forthwith in God, even as the ipil of the eye closes at the touch of an atom of ust. And all such sensitiveness of conscience ust be destroyed by the habit of freely handling he faults of others.

Yet we find good people as ready as others with a bad word or a malicious story, and their example does a world of mischief. It is so much easier to imitate a good man in such things than in what is right, and we are so ready to take shelter under the excuse that we may surely do what one so much better than ourselves does without scruple!

Sometimes human respect, and an inclination to make ourselves agreeable to those we are with, encourages the tendency; or we are afraid of seeming singular, and being thought to set ourselves up as stricter than others; or we do not like to oppose persons of more worldly consequence than ourselves. But all such motives are alike cowardly and unworthy of one who seeks to be led by God's Holy Spirit of Grace.

Of course such freedom in criticising others leads on to an undue judgment of those set over us by God; perhaps indeed petty interests and spite may cause our superiors to be most severely handled of all. It may be that they have themselves set us the example. Want of reticence in speech is easily acquired, and if we let ourselves talk at random of whatever comes uppermost, the sin of evil-speaking is almost sure to be aggravated by its exercise *upon those whom* we ought to reverence, to the

great detriment of our own spiritual condition, and the fostering of pride and dogmatism.

The habit once acquired, we are only too likely to invent and imagine where there is no real foundation for gossip—a depraved taste craves for something to censure—and there is an end to all truth and confidence; while bickerings, angry feelings, strife and bitterness ensue. "Behold how great a fire a little spark kindleth." If such gossips are members of a Community, they will infallibly be the pests thereof. Would they like their past errors raked up and discussed; their chance infirmities enlarged upon; their peculiarities of manner or their habits ridiculed? And do people, who give way to this gossip and criticism, mention it in confession? No doubt they would duly confess any notable breach of charity, but I am afraid they do not dream of confessing the numberless trifling things said to their neighbour's injury from mere wanton carelessness, or owing to the want of a habit of self-restraint. This can scarcely be a right use of the sacrament of reconciliation. Furthermore, it might be well for such offenders to ask themselves if our neighbour is not like ourselves, a member of Christ's Body? Is he not as the apple of His Eye? Is there anything more closely enjoined upon us by our Dear Lord than the love of our brethren? Does He not say that whatsoever we do to them He counts as done to Himself? And when we wound a brother's reputation, bring to light or exaggerate his faults, or ridicule his natural imperfections, do we remember that Jesus *suffers in him,* and that we are proving how little

we love our Lord? May God grant us all to be more watchful over our words!

Those who are really advancing in the spiritual life are sure to be striving after great charity in words. Happy they who never say an unkind word, theirs is indeed the blessing of the peace-maker. Where a Community observes this rule, you are sure to find peace and unity, freedom from all strife and party. Personally, too, it is a rule which none can observe without benefit. Experience teaches us all that we rarely quit society without some soil or stain upon the soul, and half the subject-matter of our confessions springs more or less directly from our intercourse and conversation with others. But if you have sufficient self-control to restrain your tongue, you will not be injured by society and contact with other men. Indeed, I was going to say that if you can abstain from evil-speaking, you will be almost perfect; it is a fact that those Religious who observe the rule of silence have very little whereof to accuse themselves generally; and S. James says that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body," as though the tongue were the source of all sin. The habit of watching over this most insidious and constant foe will no doubt keep you on the alert as to all else, and tend greatly to purify your whole life. Much as a scrupulous habit of mind is to be avoided, you may be a trifle scrupulous on this score without much danger. Moreover, the habit of perfect charity in word implies a very close union with *God; for what else* could produce such constant

recollection as it involves? Your neighbour's defects may be very evident, worthy of censure, others are discussing them, and words quickly escape you; nothing save the habit of union with God, speaking, living in His Presence, could give the habitual restraint which ends in perfect charity. Watch those whose lives you know to be very interior, and while the general conversation around is censorious, and everybody indulges their wit at the expense of others, the interior man will be grave and courteous, but he will not join such conversation, or encourage it by a look or smile. Depend upon it a ready spirit of censoriousness is the rock on which many good men make shipwreck. How can he come fitly to receive the Holy Sacrament of Love whose lips are soiled with uncharitable words? Believe me, your only safety lies in treating nothing that infringes on the law of charity as slight or unimportant. Never mind the different degrees, but remember that all evil-speaking is to be avoided. Perhaps the most trifling breaches of charity may be the most dangerous because the least noticed. Words are almost as quick as thought; let all yours breathe only good-will towards men, and they will be sure to promote God's Glory.

Take as your maxim, "I mind my own business." Let others say and do as they will—"I mind my own business." Let the wise world retail its marvels —"I mind my own business." Treat all matters which are not your concern as though they did not exist; let the wise or foolish do as they will, mind *your own business*; take no part in gossip or

slander, and if you tell me that it is at times necessary to speak of a neighbour's fault, all I have to say is, make it a rule never to do so unless you can actually remedy some evil by it. Experience proves that we seldom talk about our neighbour's imperfections with a sincere view to rectify them, it is far more generally out of love of talking and lack of reticence.—One rule more. Whenever it is possible, defend the absent, or if that is impossible, turn the conversation. This was S. Teresa's custom, so that she was called "the advocate of the absent." If you cultivate the like spirit of charity, you will not only save your conscience many a stain; but your words, instead of being the occasion of sin, will become a source of grace and merit to your soul.

VIII.

Necessity of Interior Recollection.

"*Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*"—PROV. iv. 23.

THERE can be no real growth in holiness without interior recollection, through which we attain detachment from earthly things, self-knowledge, holiness, and a habit of self-sacrifice. Nothing sets a man so free from the bondage of worldliness, or so enables him to say with David, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee."[1] By recollection the Christian learns to "die daily" to the cares and pleasures of the world, sensual affections cease to trouble him, and he becomes almost unconscious to all that does not concern his soul. S. Paul calls himself "the prisoner of the Lord," and recollection brings the soul into that blessed captivity of which he speaks; it cannot move save by the action of grace. God's Hand is on it: "When God, Who hath the key of David, shutteth, no man openeth."[2] Self-knowledge can only be obtained through inward recollection. Flattery and falsehood may have deceived you, but *within your* own heart truthful conscience will set

[1] *Ps.* lxxiv. 24. [2] Rev. iii. 7.

plain truths before you, and warn you of your danger; it will recall your past faults, revealing that over which pride had cast a veil. But without recollection the voice of conscience cannot make itself heard, and when habitually stifled or disregarded, it ceases to strive within. Recollection gives you time to see all your shortcomings before God as they are, and realising how often you have profaned His Sanctuary—your own body which is His Temple,—you will learn to fall down before Him in earnest acts of reparation. The true penitent says but little, his humble attitude and expression best set forth sorrow and regret, and this attitude of the heart before God can only be the result of inward recollection. Who would not desire to be judged in this life rather than in the next for the sins he has committed? And to this end you must recollect yourself, and bring yourself voluntarily before God's tribunal, there accusing yourself with holy compunction; and filled with loving sorrow await His sentence. If love and pity restrain His Hand, judge yourself, lying prostrate at His Feet, full of grief at having offended so merciful a Father. Such righteous indignation against yourself will win His favour, but it must be the work of a recollected spirit. A true spirit of self-sacrifice is in like manner only to be acquired by the help of recollection. Your heart is an altar, whereupon you must offer up a continual sacrifice of all to which human nature clings, your spiritual joys and consolations, as well as your most innocent earthly delights, so that God Alone may be your support. But without recollection *it is not* possible thus to offer up the heart

to God or to realise our own nothingness, and the absolute necessity of utterly casting one's self upon God before there can be any real growth in holiness.

Did you ever reflect that it is, so to say, within your heart that God vouchsafes to commune with your soul? And, dwelling upon this fact, are you not urgently moved to put away all frivolity and heedlessness, which must hinder if it does not banish His Blessed Presence? Men meet one another with the intention of closer acquaintance, to transact business, or share some pleasure; and even on those occasions, when God vouchsafes to visit the heart with such grace, a recollected soul realises His greatness and goodness concealed under the outward circumstance, while God (if it may be said reverently) seems to read and know the soul now laid bare before Him within the silence and stillness of recollection. Alone with God:—it is an awful thought, but in that blessed solitude He makes known His intentions and ways to the loving heart, and draws it to Himself with the strong cords of love. How often has He waited for you there, and you have been distracted by the world's noise and heeded Him not, and that for lack of recollection?

God is the mainspring of your life, the Centre round which you move. That Centre, the source of life and movement, once found, all is rest and happiness. He is ever seeking to bring us to our true Rest. He besieges our hearts with His Grace, but until, through inward recollection, we accept Him as our Centre, we are far from Him—we can *find no rest.* Yet further, He enters into the

recollected heart, and Himself vouchsafes to dwell therein, as He will not do where hurry and distraction leave Him no meet resting-place. It is a marvellous thought that the heart is God's Own Sanctuary. In the Jewish temple of old there were sundry courts, and beyond them all the Sanctuary or secret place, where none save the High Priest might enter, and that only on certain occasions. Your heart is even such a sanctuary, the living temple of God, and you must "reverence His sanctuary."[1] Surely you should delight to dwell therein, and wait the coming of your Lord; yet without the spirit of recollection you will be for ever wandering forth, losing the precious gift of His Presence. God's Holy Spirit comes to the recollected heart to teach and guide it. The Eternal Father spoke with thunderings and mysteries under the old covenant. The Incarnate Word spoke with the lips of men when He vouchsafed to dwell among men. But the Holy Ghost speaks His gracious words of Love and Mercy within the heart. S. Paul tells us that God writes therein "not with ink, but with the Spirit," and it is thus alone that we can hope to acquire the Divine Science of the Saints. The hidden life would not be so rare among us as it is if we were not so prone to rush forth into the world's hurry and turmoil, so little given to dwell peacefully within, and await that blessed teaching whereby we may attain to a knowledge of all the mysteries of the spiritual life.

A really recollected man will also receive the Lord Jesus Christ within his heart as within a tabernacle,

[1] Levit. xxvi. 2.

and thrice blessed indeed is he! We mourn some times because our Dear Lord is so poorly house upon our altars; but we can make ready to receiv Him with love and reverence within our hearts, y not without a recollected spirit.

There is another and very weighty thought o which we may well ponder, and that is that the inn life which has not been recollected in God, ma from its tendency continually to fall away from Hir become at length a very hell. Were there no plac appointed for the lost, that soul would find no re amid the Saints in Paradise which had quitted th world without learning to live to God. The inn existence of man's heart without God is a ver terrible object to contemplate, whereas with Hi all is Paradise, even amid agony and martyrdom.

Strive then ever to recollect yourself withi yourself, and fix your thoughts on God dwelling i you. S. Bernard says that it is a kind of apostas ever to stray forth. It may be that you feel wretche weak, and soiled within, unfit to be God's dwellin place, but be not afraid. Desire His Presence an He will find room therein—some cleft in the roc some hidden spot. God's most precious dealin with the soul are in these depths of the inner lif The newly risen Saviour did not first visit H chosen disciples, or the blessed ones in Heave but those who waited in the shades of Hade Search the deep of your own unworthiness, qu yourself, quit all objects other than God by yo earnest recollection, and then He will come to yo to guide and comfort and shape your inner life, an *mould it into His* own perfection and holiness.

IX.

The Greatness of God.

"*They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*"—JOHN iv. 24.

THERE was a beautiful conceit of olden times which represented the stars as moving in their orbits with a measured cadence, which, as they crossed one another's path, resulted in an exquisite harmony. And in truth all creation, from the lowest to the highest, is designed to unite in one vast concert of adoration and worship to God's Infinite Greatness. Whether we gaze to the height of Heaven or to the depth of hell, voluntarily or involuntarily, in love or fear, all worlds bow before their sole Creator and Lord.

The Prophet Isaiah tells us that not even the Seraphim could look upon God's Glory without veiling their faces. S. John describes the Majesty of His Presence, whence "proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices;" before which "were seven lamps of fire burning, which are the seven spirits of God;" the "four beasts having each six wings, full of eyes within, who rest not night or day, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty;" while "the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that *sitteth on the* throne, and worship Him that liveth

for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before th Throne," because "He hath created all things, an for His pleasure they are and were created." Th whole heavenly host, "all things under the earth, "everything that hath breath," "dragons and a deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapours, wind an storm, mountains and hills," all worship Him in H Greatness, and shall we not take our part in th universal harmony? We too are His creature the work of His Hands, and if we cannot worshi Him as worthily as saints and angels, we need b bring our best, and that is never rejected. Still is our bounden duty to strive to "worship Him wit a holy worship" as far as may be, to meditate upc His Attributes, and come before Him in a spirit loving reverence.

Jesus Christ Himself has taught us the keyno to all true worship. It must be "in spirit and truth." God is All, man nothing; the soul mu bow before Him in a deep penetrating sense of i own nothingness, while a true offering of self suffer all His Will is a necessary element of re worship.

There are different ways by which we worsh God in spirit. Even as the instinctive action bodily reverence is to bow down before the obje of its homage, so the soul bows down in silen reverent adoration before its Lord, and once havir attained that mental attitude, it is well to be at res and not give way to a restless desire to renew yo acts of adoration. Such a silent outpouring of so is a true sacrifice, even as the water from the wc *of Bethlehem* which David poured out before

Lord.[1] So, too, the contemplation of our own exceeding unworthiness, and the confession of our utter inability to offer Him any fitting homage, is an act of adoration even deeper than the loudest hymns of praise. In His Sacred Humanity, His lowly Birth, His Presence yet vouchsafed us in the Holy Eucharist, our Saviour Christ has set before us the most perfect example of lowliness, and in the oblation thereof to His Father that of truest adoration. Meditating thereon we shall see more clearly into this spiritual worship.

Silence is a marked characteristic of such worship—the soul, when gazing upon God's Incomprehensible Greatness, feels its own helplessness, intellectual and spiritual, and lies passive before Him. When the Prophet Jeremiah was sent to teach the kingdoms of the earth, he exclaimed, "O Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child!" and it is in this sense of childlike helplessness that we shall best worship the Lord.

But there must be truth likewise in our worship; it must not be one of theory and speculation, which cost us nothing, but rather feed vanity and self-love. True worship involves sacrifice,—"dragons and all deeps," temptations and struggles, weary blanks and aching void of heart, all are liable to sweep over the soul and disturb deliberate forms of adoration, but such sufferings rightly borne are true and faithful worship, and may be turned to His Glory. Perhaps you encounter grievous hindrances, rebellious passions, physical depression, intellectual weariness and incapacity, lack of spiritual perception, even

[1] 2 Sam. xxiii.

disgust at your religious duties. Or your temper is uneven or violent, and you feel that there is no good thing in you. Now do not be so utterly cast down by these troubles, rather use them as means to bring you nearer to God; they may be made very precious to you if you will. Do but accept your infirmities lovingly while God chooses to leave you a prey to them. You will thereby transmute them, and like Job upon his dunghill, you will learn to worship Him with true and holy worship from amid your own toils and imperfections. Nay more, you will not only have patience with them, but you will learn, with S. Paul, to "glory in your infirmities." Where God has placed you, be it high or low, that is assuredly the place whence He wills that your worship should arise.

There is another very trying spiritual condition —when the soul feels as though it were deprived of all grace, and is plunged into a very abyss of sadness, its intellectual gifts gone, all light clouded, void and desolation everywhere. Yet even then be of good cheer. It is God Himself Who has cast you into these depths, His Hand which withdraws the gifts He gave, and if from the gulf of your misery you offer your spiritual destitution to Him, it will be a real "sacrifice of righteousness,"—a true oblation. So too of harassing temptations, whether of body or soul. Do not start from the idea that temptations can be borne so as to become an acceptable worship. "What God hath cleansed call not thou common." Your temptations are permitted by God, and rightly met they cannot fail *to turn to your* profit. Most men are ready to

worship God in some sense, but very few worship Him in the trials He sends. Of course sin is an object of hate, but if we have fallen into sin, we must still worship Him in His Incomprehensible designs, which at times have allowed even His saints to fall for their greater purification. But at no time dare we ask in a spirit of pride, Wherefore has He permitted me thus to fall? Never murmur at a temptation, rather endure it reverently, without allowing yourself to be overmuch cast down, certain that a humble, patient endurance will change its nature, and bring you a blessing. The more you are stripped of self and self-conceit (and sometimes nothing does this so effectually as a humiliating temptation) the more capable you will become of true adoration.

Such a spirit, though hard to win, leads to rapid progress in detachment. A nearer insight into God's Perfection lessens the power of earthly attractions. What was once a pleasure becomes a weariness, and the soul having once tasted the sweetness of its Saviour's Presence, turns away from mere human pleasures as worthless and empty. Moreover, this worship has the effect of a continual purification. God's sunshine rests upon the soul, dries up the mists of earthliness, and fertilises it with His life-giving warmth. You will increase in watchfulness as you realise more that you are ever living and moving beneath His gaze of purity and majesty; your love will grow more fervent, and you will rejoice to offer every power of body or soul, every action, every breath, every moment of your *life, to His Glory*; your instinctive upward glance

will be ever seeking Him you love and serve, and you will be drawn with an ever-increasing union to Him. Strange to say, the very greatness of our distance from God, and the self-abasement with which our knowledge of it fills us, promotes this union. Abraham took upon him to speak unto the Lord, *because* he was but dust and ashes, and so the soul attains a capacity for union with that Great and Terrible Majesty as it sinks down into the depths of its own nothingness, thence to adore His Incomprehensible Majesty. The confession of our worthlessness is a great truth, and God, Who is Truth itself, accepts it from us, and accepting loves us and unites us to Himself.

The blessed ones in Paradise adore Him in the brightness of their joy, in the purity of their white raiment, in their song of praise with which Heaven re-echoes. Theirs is the highest part in the harmony of creation, let us gladly take our lower strain, and never lie so low before His Throne but what we would willingly be lower were it His Will. Once those now in Paradise were like to us; struggling here on earth through humiliations, sufferings, darkness and imperfection, and thus they found their way to endless joy and light. Let us awhile bear our earthly toil, until the burden is turned into joy and triumph before Him, our adoration become all brightness and glory, so that "the bones which Thou hast broken shall rejoice."

X.

On Prayer.

"My prayer shall turn into mine own bosom."—Ps. xxxv. 13.

THERE are two practical details in connection with prayer, which are not always sufficiently eeded, namely, a right use of the time devoted to hat spiritual exercise—for we cannot economise it oo carefully—and a watchful control of the body, ıs regards the circumstances, attitude, etc., in which ve attempt to pray.

As to the first of these points, it seems needless .o say you must have fixed times for prayer; that .s obvious, but the difficulty lies in a thorough ıppreciation of the need for a fixed rule as to its practice and its diligent observance. The whole question of prayer is one of grace, and not unfrequently grace is most specially given where there is the most punctual obedience. Unless you adhere faithfully to your appointed hours of prayer, you are apt to be seeking self rather than God, and there is no slight danger that your time will be lost; indeed, were there no other benefit in a habit of punctuality, that of constantly giving up self-will would be great. It may be that when the appointed hour for prayer arrives, you are not inclined to pray, or *chance circumstances* would lead you to postpone

the duty, and unless you persevere, you will soon acquire a habit of following your own inclinations, and your prayers will be regulated by mere taste or impulse; you will fall into the error of mistaking feeling for grace; your devotions will probably be curtailed, for when the right time has been let slip it is not easily replaced, and if you feel at liberty to choose your own times for prayer, you will no doubt also feel free to shorten your devotions. It is but a step further, if you have no definite rule, to give up all regular prayer. Without the help of grace weariness inevitably creeps in, and if you have no imperative rule to obey, you will surely be tempted to throw aside an irksome duty.

But if you look upon your time of prayer as specially consecrated to God, you will be very careful not to shorten it, or give yourself any dispensations which rob Him of what is His to your own great loss; for prayer is a time of special intercourse with God, and who can say what we lose by wilful carelessness as to one such precious moment? I do not say that mental prayer is in itself absolutely necessary to salvation, but unquestionably it is one of the most important means of grace we possess, whether as ruling and guiding men's passions and inclinations, or learning God's Will, and drawing closer to Him. Most of those who have gone astray have begun with neglecting prayer, and it is by the help of prayer that the wanderer returns to the paths of holiness and salvation.

For fear of scruples, however, bear in mind that you are free, and it is right to leave off your wonted *prayers, (1.)* Under any pressing call of charity,

for the less must give way to the greater, "and the greatest of all is charity." (2.) When hindered by illness, which is in itself a kind of prayer, as effectual, it may be, as any that you can offer. (3.) When some Providential circumstance interferes, necessity being a sufficient excuse, under which you need feel no uneasiness.

It is most useful to seize all incidental opportunities of prayer over and above your appointed seasons. Be on the watch for such occasions when you may withdraw from the toil and hurry of daily life, and commune silently within your heart with God; though it may be merely offering yourself and your occupations to His Glory, or realising more intensely for a moment His Presence. When the Holy Spirit leads you to such passing acts of devotion, obey them unfailingly, saying, "Behold, I come to do Thy Will, O God." But do not wait to be sensibly moved to such acts of prayer; be constant in them when your soul is a prey to spiritual desolation. Men are wont to have recourse to prayer with a view to relief under such desolation, do you seek to sanctify it by offering it up a loving willing sacrifice to His Holy Will.

With respect to the external conditions under which we pray, some people think that as the interior mind is of most importance, outer things are of no consequence at all, and as a result they are very apt to be weary and cold, or full of distractions. Unquestionably a humble bodily attitude is fitting when we would seek God's Mercy, and it is a mere self-delusion to suppose that the *spirit is not influenced* by the circumstances in

which our bodies are placed during prayer. The real reason for such an assertion is the unwillingness to impose any physical inconvenience on ourselves, and so we take up some easy position, and fidget and change about as though by so doing we should find greater calm and facility in our devotion. Of course there are people whose bodily weakness must be consulted in order to leave their minds free and undistracted, but more often it is through mere indolence that men indulge in careless irreverent attitudes, and there must be some danger lest the prayers said under such external conditions be likewise slack and wanting in reverence. You would shrink from any voluntary act of mental disrespect to God, why not also from physical irreverence? Are not body and mind alike His fashioning?

We all complain of the distractions which hinder us in prayer, and certainly a reverent attitude is a great help against these; it is, as it were, a protest against wandering thoughts, and the habit of bodily composure has a tendency to check mental distraction. But recollection in prayer must involve a habit of watchfulness at other times. If you would pray well you must keep guard over your senses, especially your eyes and ears; or the pleasant sights of the world, and the gossip of those around, will rise up when least called for, and be the cause of endless distractions, hindering that union with God which should be the chief aim of all prayer. Outward things leave vivid impressions upon the mind which are not easily effaced, and you must often have felt the recollections of what you have *heard and seen* rising up before you in the solemn

seasons of prayer to your great hindrance. Self-restraint through your daily life will help to keep your mind free from these dangerous impressions, and either you will not be troubled with distractions, or at all events you will find yourself much better able to deal with them. The practice of bodily mortification is also a great help towards attaining a spirit of prayer, but of course this must be regulated in the case of each individual by his physical strength and his director's advice. But those persons can hardly hope to attain to any high graces of prayer who cling obstinately to worldly comfort and self-indulgence in every shape. Above all, if you would win a really prayerful spirit, keep watch over your words and talk little—the man of prayer always tends to become a silent man.

Even in prayer itself, words will be few where the spirit is strong; and he who has made most advance will be least diffuse, whether it be that he is taught by the Holy Spirit to listen rather than speak, or that he is enthralled by the sweetness of communion with God. Nor is it likely that a man who is acquiring an increasing habit of inward recollection, will be externally loquacious, or that one much given to superfluous talk can become devout. Those whose vocation is to a contemplative life generally have a thoughtful concentrated manner, which restrains them from all conversation save such as kindness and courtesy exact; they are like strangers whose real life is elsewhere, and they take part in the affairs of this world only out of necessity. To such men the frivolity of the *world's talk is utterly* wearisome—even conversation

on holy things may be an effort, just as Moses, after communing with God, found it hard to descend to the things of earth. Who that has tasted the joys of such intercourse could fail to find our ordinary earthly conversation most irksome?

The habit of watchfulness all through your daily life will attune your mind to prayer. There will then be no forcible turning aside when the appointed hour arrives; you have but to draw a little closer to God, and continue in the same strain. Indeed such watchfulness is in itself a perpetual prayer. To pray well you need to pay close attention to yourself and to God, and that is just what you have been aiming to do all along; and if you have not succeeded as you would wish, never fear but that God will help you to do that which has been your constant endeavour; if you have perpetually striven to recollect yourself in Him, He will not fail to kindle a still more fervent desire within you. "Behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." All will work together for your good even if you do not see how it is.

Resist all the wanderings of imagination so as to leave your heart ready for the Divine influences. True prayer requires a pure, well-prepared heart. "His fan is in His Hand, and He will throughly purge His floor." Every day evil impressions and follies of imagination assault the heart; their attacks are incessant. So must be your self-defence if you would not feel that your distractions in prayer are, to a certain extent, voluntary. Thus, whenever you discover that you have been giving way to an *over-free wandering* imagination, recollect yourself

and draw near afresh to God, and then in prayer you may feel satisfied that your distractions are not voluntary.

Another great help towards acquiring a true spirit of prayer, is a diligent aim at maintaining through the day such fervour and good resolutions as were kindled during your morning meditation. By so doing you will continue to pray through all your occupations, whatever they be, and it is a seemly action of thanksgiving for the grace given you. If God has vouchsafed you some special sweetness in prayer, He surely means you to cherish and cultivate it, not to let it pass away like a mere cloud. The bonds of His Love cannot be cast aside as you rise from your knees, nor will His Grace take deep root in your soul without a continued effort on your part. We hear some persons complain that the graces which were so delightful during the time of prayer have too soon passed away; if it is so, be sure it arises solely from their having neglected to cherish the holy impressions they had received.

Finally, I would say, avoid the error into which many fall of seeking your own enjoyment as the first object of prayer. Strive more to please God than yourself in it. If you have no sweetness in prayer, be content that it should all flow back into His Bosom whence alone it springs. Accustom yourself often to let your prayers take the form of self-examination: "Before judgment examine thyself, and in the day of visitation thou shalt find mercy."[1] For want of this many souls remain as deplorably ignorant of self, and as much led by their passions, after years

[1] Ecclus. xviii. 20.

of prayer, as before. Do not bind yourself over-scrupulously to the subjects you had prepared, or to any method, but give yourself up to the leadings of Grace as they arise, lest you resist God's Holy Spirit. Obey His loving impulses, and do not fancy that you are losing time, although you are not following the regular points of meditation. There will be more lasting gain to your soul in following God's leading than in a rigid adherence to any fixed system. If you find that your prepared meditation does not touch your heart, do not fear to turn to some other subject which suits your actual condition better. This will both tend to tranquillise your mind, and supply your spiritual need. But, after all, the only way to pray profitably is in the spirit of earnest adoration, self-abnegation, silence, and resignation. Place your soul reverently before God as your Source and Author, humble yourself at His Feet, "and He will lift you up."[1] Keep perfect silence within your heart. What word of yours can say so much as that inward absorbed adoration does to God? Give yourself up to all His leadings, to His trials, to all that He may will. Accept whatever He sends with blind submission. These mental attitudes will ensure a really profitable prayer, however your sensible dispositions may vary. Above all, learn to do little and bear much in prayer—nothing requires so much patience and forbearance. Prayer is beset with difficulties which come as trials from God, from our own imperfections, from its own unearthly nature. And thus patience in prayer will be the very key-stone of the fabric of your life.

[1] James iv. 10.

XI.

On the Trials of Prayer.

"*I will make her as a wilderness.*"—HOSEA ii. 3.

PRAYER is beset with sundry trials, and yet many who are constantly experiencing these do not know how to use them aright, and so fail to turn them to their own sanctification. The Prophet Hosea alludes to some such condition, when he speaks of the soul "as a wilderness;" and an Eastern wilderness was desolate, rocky, infested by wild beasts. So the soul is tried in its wilderness of prayer by desolation, dryness, and at times by wild and harassing fancies. Sometimes these troubles are simply our own causing, but God permits our sanctification to be advanced by them, and it depends upon our using them aright to turn them into blessings.

It is unquestionably a great trial, when, in spite of an earnest desire and effort to pray, the soul remains in a barren state, unable to fix upon any holy thought or kindle any good desire. But one frequent cause of this trial is that we too often enter upon our devotional exercises without any due preparation, and so we find nothing but a reflection of our own state, dry emptiness. "The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord."[1] It is mere

[1] Prov. xvi. 1.

presumption to enter thus upon prayer, expecting God to work in the heart when we have done nothing to lead Him so to deal with us, and such prayer is generally time wasted. Another class of men fall into this trial through indolence; they do make some preparation as to the subjects of prayer, but beyond that they expect everything to be done for them; whereas God requires a fervent application of the mind to prayer, and so by reason of their own sloth such persons are left barren and lifeless.

Frivolity of mind is another source of the same evil—the habit of mind which never fixes on any subject steadily. Dulness of perception may with some be the cause of this defect. An exceeding purity of life is the true remedy for training such as these in mental prayer.

Of course those who are leading a mere worldly life can hardly fail to be unworthy of the graces of prayer, but for such as are really faithful to their holy calling, and yet suffer grievously under the trials of prayer, there is much whence to take comfort. It may be that God Himself is leading you through this wilderness. Examine yourself; perhaps you long too greedily after spiritual delights; perhaps you aim presumptuously at having a gift of prayer, and treading in high paths. If so, God may be humbling and correcting you by this void, teaching you that even holy things must be sought after in a composed spirit. An over-eager spirit is rarely a spirit of grace; and this trial is intended to temper your ardour, and teach you to seek God *calmly and* patiently, even in prayer. Or it may

be that you are apt to attach yourself too exclusively to the sensible satisfaction which you experience in prayer, and God wills to detach you from a mere selfish delight in His Mercies by this trial, "purifying their hearts by faith." Be sure that when God thus withholds His Gifts, the blank is most profitable to your soul; and it behoves you to co-operate with Him, and accept such dryness and desolation with as much alacrity as if they were sensible delights. He lays them on you, that you may learn to rest more wholly upon Him; God is a Spirit, and He wills you to worship Him in spirit and in truth, in all simplicity and purity, and therefore He deprives you of all that is not Himself. Be it yours to submit to His guidance, and to accept the trial calmly and patiently. If once you can realise that your seemingly barren prayer is God's work, that might well suffice; but we may go further, and believe that when He creates a void in the heart it is with the intention of filling it Himself—He will not share our hearts with any created thing. Such a void tends greatly to purify the soul, and lead it on to union with God; through patient endurance of it you make a free offering to Him, and prove your fidelity to Him. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

If then you are sure that the barrenness you feel in prayer is not the result of indolence, and have accepted the belief that it is a means of spiritual progress rightly used, your next inquiry must be, how thus to use the trial rightly and to your soul's health? To this end, when you have done all you *can to enter warmly* into the subject of your medi-

tation, and yet cannot succeed, do not strai
mind, but rest tranquilly within yourself a
points out; He sees your incapacity, and y
gain more by waiting patiently than by forced
But be firm and stedfast, and never give up
because you are weary and downcast; rather
your submission and acquiescence in God's
abiding in your darkness and weariness;
yield to impatience and seek consolation else
but, like a beggar at the rich man's gate, a
ledge your entire dependence upon Him, an
barren meditation will be blessed to you.

There is another great trial when the soul
led into the wilderness, and that is when it
ences not only a blank, but positive hardne
insensibility. Yet even here God may be
than you think for. This trial may be you
fault. Are you given to seek all attainable
indulgence and comfort? do you consider tha
is no need to deny yourself in things lawful?
you have yet to learn that a love of earthly
gence and a taste for prayer are incom
things, and that it is mere presumption for
who rest in earthly delights to aspire after he
consolations. When the heart is depraved
material enjoyment, it is incapable of tasti
sweetness which flows from God Himself.
not this, are you cumbered with earthly attach
and clingings, which bind you to this world
are you seeking self rather than God in Hi
worship?

If conscience tells you that your hardn
prayer does not arise from any of these cause

up your heart and believe that God may intend
ereby to lead you to a spirit of prayer as yet
yond your desires, and to teach you to die to self,
en in that very holy exercise whereby you thought
ly to win spiritual life and enjoyment. Self creeps
en into prayer, and He will not have you seek
lf therein, but Him Only. Such self-indulgence
a great hindrance in the inner life. Perhaps,
o, you have felt some self-applause in your own
pacity for prayer, and now God withholds those
fts which were His, not yours, that you may
alise whence they came. At times, too, coldness
ıd dryness are sent as a preparation for some
eat spiritual grace ; or at all events you may be
ıre that the sweetness and delight withheld from
ithful prayer here will be abundantly given to you
. Paradise. Even spiritual joys here pass away,
ıt who can measure the fulness with which they
e stored up there, where they will last through all
ernity? If God pleases to take all power of
elight in prayer from you, offer to Him a submissive
ill, and be thankful that you have somewhat to
fer.

There is another advantage of this trial ; it
ispels the illusions and deceptions which we are
ɔt to impose on ourselves, and which lead to many
fall. Hardness and delusions seldom go together,
ıd if your prayers are painful you may at least
ke comfort in the thought that you are not liable
) be self-deceived therein. There is comfort too
ı remembering that, whether in prayer or other
ıings, this life is not a season of joy, but rather of
ɔrrows *and tears*—and we must not be surprised

that we find it so—rather accepting the fact, and content to bear with it in gentle sadness, while exiled from our true home.

But all the while, sanctifying as these trials may be, they are very bitter to the soul, and it is hard work to draw water from the rock, or to reap an abundant harvest from an ungrateful soil; and at times an overpowering dread sweeps over the heart that it is all your own fault, and that you deserve nothing from God. But the only thing under your own control is your will, and if your will does not consent to the dryness and deadness of your prayers, rather grieves over it,—there is no need to torment yourself as though the trial were your own fault, and so unprofitable.

Or if you doubt whether your prayer is accepted of God, be sure that is a mere subterfuge of the natural man to veil a secret impatience under which you groan. Do not deceive yourself, or seek certainty of His acceptance under vain pretexts; rather submit your hardness and insensibility simply to God, whether it be permitted by His Justice or His Love. All His true servants accept and love even darkness from His Hand. "Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?"[1] Have you yet to learn that in the spiritual life one's sole aim should be to do all that depends upon ourselves, and then to bear patiently whatever depends upon God Only?

There is another trial which besets prayer, and from which few are wholly exempt, and that lies in the imagination, which distracts us with follies

[1] Isa. xlii. 19.

innumerable, disturbing and marring our holiest moments. Now most of us deserve all we have to suffer in this respect, inasmuch as we do not guard against impressions from without, or the endless follies of the world around, which we allow to engross and occupy our minds, till they are clogged and lowered in tone,—and then we marvel that our prayers are hindered and infested by the same. But if one's imagination has been allowed to run loose all day, who can wonder that it continues to do so when we kneel down to pray? Perhaps too those who complain so much of these distractions, are not making any very vigorous effort to shake them off—an effort which is always troublesome, sometimes painful. You would prefer to be free from distractions, but your struggles against them are not earnest; your foolish fancies are stronger than your will; and in truth you have chiefly yourself to thank for such hindrances in prayer. Some, again, have naturally such lively imaginations as are all but unmanageable, and they need great patience and humility in the guidance thereof; and these are souls who, troubled as they are at their involuntary distractions, may yet turn their trouble to edification.

It is through God Alone that this can be done. There are souls whom He is leading in His higher ways, and yet meanwhile He allows them to be humbled by their own imaginations and distractions; and all God's humiliations should be precious to the soul. Perhaps you are conscious of some special gift in prayer, and in order to teach you that any such gift depends solely upon Him, while you have *no merit in it,* God leaves you a prey to the follies

of your imagination, and you learn by sad experience that all graces you may attain in prayer are His Gift. Or He tries your stedfastness, in order that your heart may revert to Him, unwearied by the humbling consciousness of its own perpetual wanderings.

We are all ready to talk about self-sacrifice and voluntary mortification. But instead of dwelling upon fancied sacrifices, accept those which come upon you through distractions in prayer, the loss of sensible enjoyment in it which other men have, the humiliation of becoming conscious of having but a weak wandering imagination,—and you will win some precious lessons. Prayer brings forth many choice fruits, and none is more blessed than a spirit of deep humiliation, which a lively sense of your own wandering imagination must produce. Offer such distractions to God, as martyrs have offered their tortures, or Job his temptations. But, above all, never try to escape them by ceasing to pray. Self-renunciation and earnestness will bring you through the trouble. When wandering thoughts seize upon you in prayer, do not add to your own perplexity by fighting with them—be content to put them aside calmly, turn away from them, accept them as a trial to be rightly used, a punishment to be received from God, and you will find the tone of your prayer raised, and grace flowing in upon you. God has framed your heart. He knows the trials of your imagination—believe that He knows best what trials it can bear. Those who have learnt to wait patiently have made a vast stride in the *spiritual life.*

XII.

Contemplative Prayer.

"*When ye make many prayers, I will not hear you.*"—Isa. i. 15.

IT is not uncommon to find persons of varying spiritual capacities aiming indiscriminately at this kind of prayer so soon as they begin to seek God heartily. Now, unquestionably contemplative prayer is a most blessed thing, and tends to purify the soul and unite it to God; but we must remember that it is often counterfeited, in which case it only leads to delusion, and those who aspire presumptuously to heights whereto they are not called, through vanity or indolence, find in it not a grace but a punishment. It follows that before attempting any such lofty aim, you should seek really to know what true contemplative prayer is. In few words, then, it implies looking fixedly upon some religious topic, without any intellectual effort, and consequently without making any distinct acts, which would interrupt this simple contemplation, though in fact the soul does make certain scarcely perceptible acts of devotion, though not such as lead to self-consciousness or self-contemplation.

However real this manner of prayer may seem, do not be satisfied too quickly that it is all right until you *have tested* it thoroughly. The life of

one given to contemplative prayer should be marked by exceeding purity, and a very sensitive conscience. Such prayer implies a pure gaze fixed upon God without any interposing veil. Our blessed Lord has taught us the blessing of the pure in heart; —"they shall see God," and those whose habitual aim is to cleanse their souls from every speck or stain will be specially enabled to contemplate God in His Holiness.

Again, if you would practise contemplative prayer try yourself, whether you are so detached from earthly affections as to seek no more from them than what is really necessary. This is a strong test of true union with God. Examine whether you possess a hearty self-abhorrence. Contemplative prayer requires the greatest simplicity, and an indifference to self which is prepared to throw aside all personal gain, retaining nothing save a sense of utter unworthiness. Consider also whether you have really forsaken the things of this world? God gives freely to the soul in contemplative prayer, but not until it is stripped of all it called its own.

You must go on to examine the character of the prayer itself. If your conscience assures you that you are not merely wasting time, it is a strong testimony,—conscience "bears witness" under God's own teaching. Again, if time passes so swiftly when you are praying thus, that hours seem like moments, you may believe that God's Holy Spirit is guiding your prayer. Nature wearies under prolonged prayer, love only makes the time pass rapidly, even as the years which Jacob served for *Rachel seemed* "but a few days for the love he had

her." A deep impression of some holy truth
netrating the whole soul is another sign of God's
mediate dealing, as also a sense of absolute calm
d repose, which cannot be disturbed by the
rious thoughts and considerations which arise
thin the mind. And one most important test is
ether your prayer brings forcibly to light every
adow of frailty and imperfection in you. If you
e deceiving yourself through mere indolence you
ill not be quick to see your own faults, but if you
e really guided by God's Holy Spirit, you will
are, so to say, in the purity of His gaze, and
u will be keenly ready to perceive and avoid
erything which is displeasing to Him.

But we must not rest satisfied with these tests of
e genuine character of contemplative prayer. Go
to examine whether the due results are to be
und. It should stimulate you in the practice of
oliness, and the more absolute the repose the soul
as enjoyed in prayer the more active it should be
terwards in the pursuit of duty, like the seed which,
ter lying dormant in the earth, springs forth into
a abundant harvest. The life of your prayer will
e proved by the fruits brought forth in action, by
our readiness and zeal for all good works, all
crifice, doing and bearing gladly. Again, it is a
gn of true contemplative prayer, when the savour,
to say, lingers about the heart long after the
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tisfactory signs; the soul which has rested simply
God in its prayer will seek Him as simply in

action, and He exercises a very special care over those who walk thus singly with Him. A tranquil straightforward life, not drawn hither and thither by an infinity of cares and interests, is a strong proof that your contemplative prayer is real. When the soul is really filled with God it does not care to entangle itself with earthly cares, and whatever tends to distract it from Him is a weariness and a burden, and thus detachment is a great test as a result of prayer. And lastly, an overflowing spirit of praise, ever showing forth the abundance of His Grace in every action, is a proof that the heart has really sought and found God in its prayer. Before you assume that you have the gift of contemplative prayer, try yourself by these tests fairly and stedfastly, for there are too many persons who delude themselves with the thought that they are rapt in communion with God in this way, while really they are but dreaming, the victims of imagination. Now if a person says that his attraction for this kind of prayer is so strong that he is unable to make any intellectual effort, I would ask him whether he is not disposed to enter into society both before and after prayer under the excuse of courtesy and propriety, and whether he does not take a natural pleasure in conversation; whether, notwithstanding his contemplative prayer, he is not willing to amuse himself much as other men do? And if so, he deceives himself as to the nature of his prayer, for contemplative prayer means that the soul is alone with God, and that will affect the outer life. Those who cling earnestly to external things have *really no attraction* for solitude, but the habit of

dwelling within the heart with God tends to lessen the taste for ordinary society and conversation.

Again, I should inquire of such persons if they are fond of dress, and without being addicted to all the follies of fashion, whether they are particular as to the taste and appointment of all their surroundings; careful as to their personal appearance? The vanity of all such worldly trifles is altogether incompatible with that simple prayer which influences the exterior as well as the inner life. Or are these aspirants to the contemplative life sensitive and touchy, ready to take offence? None save the meek and lowly can find this simple rest in God. Or do they practise habitual self-denial, striving to die to self, even in the most trivial matters; not shunning discomforts and inconveniences?

To pass from these outer signs—Does the soul we are proving feel itself bound with an irresistible attraction in prayer, so that it rests in a motionless calm? Or is it only dull and blank, because it gives way to an indolent self-satisfaction? During the time of prayer does the body remain tranquil, showing the soul's repose, or is it perpetually fidgeting and shifting its position? Bodily attitude generally takes shape from the mind, and a restless body rarely indicates a contemplative spirit. If you are thus restless, I would ask further, do you not sometimes go to sleep over your prayer,—no spiritual trance, but a most material slumber, which is very acceptable to nature, but a mere delusion when following upon an attempt at contemplation? *Do not deceive* yourself; it is mere indolence

which makes no exertion, and then expects God t act energetically within the soul.

There is yet a further test as to the nature (your prayer to be found in its results. Do yc leave off praying with an earnest spirit of recolle tion, and mind firm fixed, a controlled imaginatic amid the most distracting occupations? It is tl character of true contemplative prayer to leave th effect upon the mind. Is your tongue guarded ar restrained, are you disinclined to talk and gossi Contemplative prayer induces silence and a love solitude. Do you affect religious phraseology, ar talk with self-confidence? The true contemplati sees deep into spiritual things, but is humble ar mistrustful, afraid

> "Lest the deep stain he feels within
> Break out, and faith be shamed by the believer's sin."

The more abundantly God's graces are bestow upon a soul, the more cautious, watchful that so will be; the freer from presumption and self-esteer If you believe that He has given you the gift contemplation, try yourself by all these tests, ar should it prove that you are self-deceived, shun tl snare of a spurious unreal devotion, which cann fail to be as great a danger to your soul as tl pure and heavenly gift of a true contemplati spirit is a rare and precious grace.

XIII.

The Importance of Obedience to God's Holy Spirit.

"*If ye will hear His Voice, harden not your hearts.*"—Ps. xcv. 8.

AS all holiness depends upon the soul's faithful obedience to the motions of grace, we cannot over-estimate the importance of such obedience, or the danger of disobedience. There are three things above all necessary to our sanctification—that we understand God's ways and dealings; that we follow His leading whithersoever He would conduct us; and that we die wholly to our own will—and to none of these can we attain save by faithful obedience to the motions of God's Holy Spirit.

There is a certain ignorance which tends greatly to promote sanctification,—ignorance of the mere frivolous or worldly interests around, and of the numberless trivial irrelevant matters, which one who desires to advance in the spiritual life will avoid as far as possible, lest they take the place of holier and better things. Even ignorance of holy things may have its own grace by increasing humility and self-abnegation, if it be God's Will to withhold knowledge. But in the main it is undoubted that a clear understanding of God's ways does help the soul's progress, and the more we know of His *dealings and of His* Will the more diligent we shall

be in striving to fulfil it, the more penetrated with love and admiration for His Goodness, and so the more grateful. Next, in order to attain holiness, we must follow stedfastly in the special path by which God wills to lead us: "We know that all things work together for good to those that love God." But at the same time each one individually will find the safest and surest path in following that personal leading which God gives us. "the calling wherewith we are called" of Him.

And further, sanctification involves a death to self, which in truth is the very foundation of all spiritual life, both as casting forth the body of sin and tending to that purity without which the soul cannot "see God." Where self-will is eradicated, a long stage has been won in the way of holiness.

But none of these steps can be won save by giving diligent heed to the teaching of God's Holy Spirit. All knowledge of God's ways and dealings is a supernatural gift, not to be attained by earthly science or learning, or by any means save direct from the Spirit of Wisdom; but in order to receive His blessed lessons, which are chiefly given in calmness and silence, the soul must shun all restlessness and impatience. The Holy Spirit leads each of us in that individual path of holiness to which God calls us. He Alone knows all God's Will, and our strength or weakness—He the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the special Sanctifier of souls, Who poureth out by measure to all. And without obedience to His inspirations, no one can *attain the holiness* to which he is called of God.

More often than not our individual path of holiness turns out to be something different from what we should have selected for ourselves; self-conceit, or the inherent blindness of our sight, leading us to frame a standard of holiness which is not that set before us by God, while His Holy Spirit strives with us, counteracting our perversion with His Grace. But without the most entire obedience to His movements within our souls, we shall miss this guidance, and grope about in our own darkness. In the same way we cannot conquer the great enemy of our spiritual life—self—save by submission to His Voice. Continual effort, strict self-control, and self-examination are necessary in this warfare, but without His help we shall never find strength or perseverance for what costs so much to human nature. He Alone can uphold our courage, and throw the light of His searching Grace upon the dark corners of our hearts—upon the treacherous self-indulgences and deceits which lurk even among our holy things. One great point, then, in your spiritual life must be to examine whether you are giving diligent heed to His Voice, and not "hardening your heart" to His pleadings within you. Resistance to Grace is a very fearful thing, and yet it is too common amongst us. All inclination to do that which is right in daily life is an inspiration from God's Holy Spirit; and are we not constantly and ordinarily making some resistance to these inclinations? Then we have from time to time more marked leadings under special circumstances, and resistance to these is deliberately to *sin against light* and grace; and this in a still

greater degree when we put from us some evide
calling to a higher or stricter path, or refuse
aim at a holiness from which our weakness reco
when God places it before us. The first of the
resistances is a great loss to our souls, althou
it may not be severely punished; but God vis
any deliberate rebellion against His leadings wi
heavy displeasure; He is a Spirit of holy fear
well as of love, and woe be to those who reject H
Grace. Perhaps He punishes such a rebel wi
silence—His Gracious Voice is no longer hea
guiding and teaching, and the soul becomes d
and heavy in perception—prayer and spiritu
reading bring no help—the will is hard, the he
cold, and cries out in affliction, "Where is now t
blessedness that once ye spake of?" God see
to have ceased taking any heed of the soul, althou
of old, when languid and drowsy, He was wont
rouse it with His Grace, rebuking every trivial fa
with a jealous love which could bear no speck
sin in His chosen servant. But now He seems
though indifferent to it. In that happier time,
He allowed trouble to press awhile upon His chi
it was but to raise him up with new tenderne
Now the offending soul is as an outcast, conscious
no warning, a false peace hiding its desolation fr
itself. That most terrible visitation is upon
when God has said, "I will hide Mine Eyes fr
you."[1]

Another way in which the Holy Spirit punis
the disobedient soul is by leaving it to work
its own will. He would have led it on in the p

[1] Isa. i. 15.

of holiness to which it was called, but the soul having refused to co-operate with His Grace, He turns away, and leaves it to try and attain perfection in its own way. This is more terrible than it seems at first, for if we endeavour to follow our own ideas of perfection, instead of obeying God's leadings, we are almost certain to fall into all manner of delusions; whether by taking a far lower standard than that to which God calls us, and imagining that perfection can be arrived at through indolence and self-indulgence; or by presumptuously seeking great things for ourselves, imagining ourselves capable of far more than God has set before us, and altogether losing sight of the lowly ways of penitence and self-renunciation by which He would have us "come up higher." A self-chosen path almost invariably leads men astray—and self-chosen discipline is apt to end in feebleness, folly, and the disedifying of others.

S. Paul tells us of some who resisted the Holy Spirit, that "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind." The natural spirit of man is altogether contrary to his soul's perfection, and where it gains an empire the whole being will be polluted and corrupted. Even holy actions are polluted by a stealthy poison, and are useless, because they no longer spring from the one true principle of life,—God's Grace, which has been rejected; worst of all, after repeated rejections, continued rebellions, God's Holy Spirit may leave the *soul never* to return. Again and again His

loving solicitations, His warnings, His chastisements have been set at nought; and it may be they will never be renewed. This fearful truth is put forth in the Canticles, when the Bridegroom stood without the door knocking, but the bride delayed opening to Him, and when at last she did open, in her own plaintive words, "My beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone; I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called on Him, but He gave me no answer."[1] Even so when God's Holy Spirit has knocked perseveringly at the door of the heart, and it has not been opened to Him, it may be that if at last that door is tardily opened, He will have taken His departure, and return no more. Christ has described such a mournful ending among the unready virgins, who were shut out from the marriage with those awful words, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not;" and again in His lamentation over Jerusalem, which had not known the time of her visitation, "Now they are hid from thine eyes."

Finally, remember that all these gracious and loving inspirations (technically called actual graces), cannot be won by any prayers, good works or mortifications, as though they were in themselves meritorious. They are solely the price of Jesus Christ's Precious Blood; and if no one can become worthy of such gifts, how dare he hope for their perpetual renewal who has done despite to the Spirit of Grace? Earthly displeasure falls heaviest on those who have received the most signal kindness and favour, and yet have rejected them scornfully. How should

[1] Cant. v.

be otherwise with the soul, if after having tasted e sweetness of God's Guidance, and having seen e way in which He would lead us, we turn wilfully vay! How indeed "shall we escape so great mnation?"

XIV.

The Sensitiveness of God's Holy Spirit.

"Turn away Thine Eyes from me, for they have overcome me."
— CANT. vi. 5.

WHEN we speak of a sensitive conscience, it is well always to bear in mind that, apart from God's help, there is practically no such thing; it is a gift which must come from Him. But there are some gentle, highly favoured temperaments which are more specially open to His gracious dealings, through which such delicacy of conscience becomes almost a second nature to the soul. Now the action of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying His chosen servants is pre-eminently characterised by a very exceeding delicacy, and it is well that those who would co-operate with His Grace should ponder carefully upon it. He is wont to carry on His hidden dealings with the soul by means of what we should call very little things. At times the operations of His Grace appear in mighty works for the conversion of sinners, but His habitual dealings with His servants are chiefly marked by their minuteness and delicacy. Nothing is beneath His watchful care, and He would have His Law to be *our guide in every* word and look, as well as in the *weightiest matters.* His jealous Love knows no

t, He is not content to let us have the smallest
rve from Him, nor will He endure that we
de our hearts which are His only. Even so He
uires an absolute purity of heart in those with
m He vouchsafes to dwell, and a spirit of self-
rifice which is ever ready to offer all things,
vever seemingly small, to Him. He binds the
l, so to say, with a chain of trifles, and the soul
ich is truly given up to His guidance will be
scious that it is perpetually and in every detail
captive of grace.

When the soul is thus subject to God's Holy
rit, He fills it with an exceeding tenderness of
science, and opens its eyes to the enormity of
slightest faults, so that His favoured ones mourn
re deeply over these than grievous sinners over
ir greater falls. One ray of His All-pure light
ws us the most trivial imperfection in its true
our, even as it appears in the sight of God; a
elation so full of awe that we must needs turn
le overwhelmed but for the keen sense of His
olding Hand.

But a trifling fault committed wantonly or deliber-
y, or a wilful resistance of grace, will drive away
sensitive Spirit and cause Him to hide Himself
n us. His gracious desire is to unite us closely
Himself, but where the slightest impurity is
nd, such union is impossible. "The Holy
rit of discipline will flee deceit, and remove
n thoughts that are without understanding,
l will not abide where unrighteousness cometh

[1] Wisd. i. 5.

Allow but one particle of deliberate sin to remain in your heart and straightway He will take His flight. He would have us ever bear in mind how quickly we can drive His pure Spirit forth. Many a man has begun his downward course by what seemed but a very trivial fault, but it led to the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit's favour and intimate presence, and from thence it is easy to pass on to utter destruction. When then you feel the sharp prick caused by any small carelessness, remember that it is His warning, and be on your guard. Such a prick is a lighter punishment than if He chastens you with silent coldness, leaving you to yourself, perhaps suffering you to cry out in your trouble, and making as though He did not hear.

One marked feature of the Holy Spirit's intimate dealings with the soul is that He trains it in a habit of silence. He does not love many words, nor is it seemly for a servant to speak much in his Master's presence. He is the Master of your conscience, where He is wont to say but little, and if you watch your own inner life you will find that the more entirely He takes possession of it the more still and silent it will become. "The Lord our God hath put us to silence."[1] Be it yours to accept the lesson and maintain inward contemplation of spirit. Among men the more refined and sensitive cannot endure overmuch or loud talk. How much less He Who is not in the storm or the whirlwind, but makes Himself known by "a still small voice." And He would have His chosen ones strive

[1] Jer. viii. 14.

imitate Him, silently seeking to draw closer and closer to Him till they lose themselves in the abyss of His Love. Happy indeed are they who attain to a perfect understanding of that which He softly whispers within their hearts! Even over-eager prayers, and impatient indiscreet intreaties for His gifts, are contrary to His Will Who is the Spirit of gentleness and peace. You know not what you really need; perhaps forsooth you ask the very things which would harm you most, therefore do not give way to eagerness in asking; rather lie in meek silence before Him, giving yourself up to His gentle touch, and He will guide you safely.

Another way in which God's Holy Spirit is very sensitive with respect to us, is that He would engross the whole soul and never permit it to forsake Him for a moment through wandering foolish thoughts. But are you not conscious that your mind is for ever straying from Him, the prey of endless vain imaginations? His delight is to possess our souls and fill them with His pure and holy love, and He is grieved when we wander aside and reject Him for our own wild delusions. Have you not felt His almost importunate intreaties to return when you have strayed thus, defrauding Him of that which is His Own; His inward calls, His tender reproaches, His winning lures, all the fruit of His sensitive Love which will not rest satisfied until you have returned to Him? Nor is He thus sensitive only as regards thoughts and imaginations; He wills to possess your undivided love—*your heart's* best affections, and in return He

gives you His own Infinite, boundless Love. But then directly that you divert any of that love which should be His into an earthly channel, He reproaches you inwardly. "Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty."[1] His Voice is heard within: "Wilt thou give to another that which thou knowest is so dear to Me? Do not I alone deserve thy love, and wilt thou set up a rival in thy heart? What have I to do with a divided heart?" If we lavish mere earthly affection upon the creature, it infallibly tends to soil and wither the soul's purity, and lower the gaze which should be fixed on God; and therefore when the Holy Spirit truly kindles a heart, He for the most part loosens the ties which bound it to the unrestrained enjoyment of such things as had too much filled and engrossed it, until He has sanctified all love, and raised all affections, even the purest, to Himself.

Neither imagine that while seeking this hidden inward union with the Holy Spirit you may neglect outer obedience to His rule. He would have you visibly stamped with the tokens of His Presence. Among these the most prominent would be an abhorrence of the world and its maxims. All that savours of its tone in conversation—all flattery, affectation, and duplicity—all vanity and frivolity in dress, all empty pomp and display—all lax worldly morality, are utterly hateful in His Sight. "It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."[2] The world is the enemy of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit Who was sent

[1] *Hos.* x. 2. [2] Matt. xviii. 7.

y Jesus to confirm all His precepts. "He shall each you all things, and bring all things to your emembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." And we may be sure that wherever those precepts are oved and followed the spirit of this world will not be ound,—for Christ says of it that "it hath nothing n Me." You will always find that whatever savours of the world's spirit is utterly repugnant to those who have attained to the true hidden life. It may be a mere tone of mind, a trifling habit, a style of conversation, but all such will jar upon the heart of one who has tasted the sweetness of the interior life, as belonging to that which is at enmity with Christ, and therefore He will recoil from it. Now this shrinking is the work of the Holy Spirit. Nor does He stop there; He will lead on the soul He loves, until it attains complete detachment from all earthly things, even such trivial matters as ordinary comforts and superfluities—a special liking for a room, a garment, a custom. All such things, trifles as they seem, have a tendency to take possession of the heart and encumber it, interfering with God's sole empire therein; and if the soul resists His Hand, He may punish it by permitting some such mere trifle to become the source of severe conflicts. He will not be repulsed, He perseveres with tender severity, stripping the soul of all that holds it back, until it has attained complete detachment from them. He gives Himself to it wholly in the stead of the earthly things to which it so clung. We may at times be tempted to think it hard that He will not allow us to find *any delight whatsoever* save in Himself. Yet it is

love as well as jealousy which is thus exacting. The pleasures of this world are material, debasing; and His Purity will not have the soul He cherishes contaminated by their touch, even when they may appear innocent in themselves. "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver."[1] All that is of the flesh must be cast out by the Spirit, the soul must be free from all sensual ties in order that it may receive His divine inspirations; therefore He puts away from it even the desires for lawful earthly delights as unworthy of one destined to enjoy God Only—teaching the chosen one to centre all his affections and longings there where alone they can find rest.

One word of warning. God's Holy Spirit does not deal with such exclusive jealousy in the case of all men, but specially with those whom He has called out of the world to be His chosen servants in the Religious life. Such persons are comparatively few, but it is all-important to those few that they realise and accept the call. They may test themselves by examining, (1.) If they are alive to every fault and movement of their heart, for no merely natural light will penetrate the depths of conscience, and expose all its hidden workings. (2.) If the slightest imperfection pierces them acutely, as a heinous sin might afflict others; for mere human nature does not sorrow thus bitterly over trifling faults. (3) If their soul is uneasy and trembling when for a moment it wanders forth from *its abiding* place in the Heart of Jesus, for the

[1] Mal. iii. 2, 3.

natural spirit of man tends more to wander abroad than to dwell within its hidden life. (4.) If the slightest fault seems to dry up the fount of grace, or in the natural life trivial imperfections are not so promptly visited by the withdrawal of grace. These tests will show whether you are indeed called to the higher paths of grace, the object of His special jealous love Who is a Consuming Fire.

XV.

How the Holy Spirit visits the Soul.

"Thy comforts have refreshed my soul."—Ps. xciv. 19.

OUR dutiful obedience to every motion of God's Holy Spirit cannot but be quickened by a consideration of His infinite tenderness in visiting and refreshing the needy soul. Holy Scripture likens this to the love of a bridegroom for his bride, and of a mother for her son whom she comforteth; and in truth that Gracious Spirit seems to delight in sustaining and cherishing His servants —visiting them with trials, consolations, soothing caresses, quick movements of compunction, purifying troubles; whatever, in short, may do most to forward the great work of sanctification. "O Lord, Thou lover of souls, Thine incorruptible Spirit is in all things, therefore chastenest Thou them by little and little that offend, and warnest them by putting them in remembrance wherein they have offended, that leaving their wickedness they may believe on Thee, O Lord."[1]

The soul is often sick, and that with very grievous maladies, which none can heal save the One Good Physician—the Holy Spirit. It may be that we languish under spiritual blindness, and while full of

[1] Wisd. xi. 26, xii. 1.

misery yet do not see that misery, and rest self-satisfied, while God beholds all the darkness and foulness of our heart. "Thou sayest I have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."[1] This deplorable state is more peculiar to those who are habitually far from God—for the light of His love usually sets the truth before such as cleave stedfastly to Him. Or we may be hardened against softening, healing grace. "His heart is as hard as a piece of the nether millstone;"[2] and then all ordinary remedies are useless. Or we may be disposed to satiate our souls with vain earthly pleasures, which stifle grace till it has no longer the power to excite a holy compunction within us. Now all these spiritual maladies are beyond the reach of human treatment, and none can heal them save God's Holy Spirit. Through His tender mercy "the day-spring from on high" comes to visit even these sin-sick souls, and to "guide their feet into the way of peace." He disperses the clouds, and the soul which could not see its own darkness is enlightened, and trembles at its blindness, its estrangement from God. Perhaps it had thought venial sins of little moment, but this light displays their weight, and the danger lest they lead on to mortal sin; the soul fondly thought itself free from any great stain, and now it sees all its misery and corruption—a sad sight truly, yet how far better and safer than self-deceit! Or if the soul was hard and stubborn, resisting all that grace has hitherto done, the Holy Spirit may visit it with such love as

[1] *Rev. iii. 17.* [2] Job xli. 24.

cannot fail to triumph, and melt its hardness. will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them an heart of flesh."[1] He tears asunder seemingly impenetrable barriers, and sets before sinner the depth and grievousness of sin—but so pitifully, and with such tender pathos, bid the wandering soul remember that it has offen a most loving Bridegroom, recalling the plea paths it once had trod, its past sins forgiven many helps and graces—until the penitent soi softened, and weeps beneath the loving severity healing wounds inflicted. Or if the soul be through over-free drinking of the polluted stre of earthly pleasure, God's Holy Spirit will visit it, after bringing it to a lively sense of its own wretcl ness, He lays a gentle pressure on it, which cl the heart to worldly delights, and excites that r precious grace—an abiding sorrow for sin—the and most effectual barrier against relapsing such snares. And so this loving Spirit, "W maketh intercession for us with groanings w cannot be uttered," heals us with that ble repentance, which is not of this world, but "worl life." But we must ever be on the watch for healing visits of our Heavenly Physician, or shall lose their grace. Therefore if it is His to lift the veil from your conscience, and let you your own shame and misery, be content to ac that shame; do not strive to turn away your g as though you could deny the truth; rather sul to the bitter but salutary medicine. If Di *sorrow pierces* your callous indifference, and

[1] Ezek. xi. 19.

soul melts within you at the sight of God's exceeding goodness, be still; believe that you can do nothing to quicken your sense of His Love and your unworthiness, and let Him deal with you as He chooses. Again, if He fills your heart with compunction, so that you can find no solace in earthly things, and all is bitterness and anguish within you, beware of seeking relief from creatures; the slightest self-sought drop of human comfort might be as a channel through which your compunction would flow away. But the Holy Spirit of God not only visits our souls as a Physician, healing and binding up our wounds; He comes also as a Friend, gladdening the heart with His unspeakable kindnesses. Those who have had no experience of this truth, or whose spiritual understanding is too hard and proud to realise it, testing all things by their own knowledge, can little imagine how sweet His intercourse is with those who love Him. He Who delights to be called "the Lover of Souls," is wont to visit His own, seemingly on purpose to pour out of the very abundance of His Infinite Love. At one time He fills the heart of His chosen servant with such unutterable tenderness that it seems to melt beneath the glow; or He grants the bride's prayer, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Thy Love is better than wine;"[1] and this most especially in Holy Communion and in mental prayer, wherein at times the soul is filled with a delight which can come from none save Him. At times He holds the soul in so stringent, so fervent an embrace that it can but remain passive,

[1] Cant. i. 2.

filled with superabundant joy, within His Arm "His left Hand is under my head, and His rig Hand doth embrace me."[1] Thrice blessed gras in which the loving soul would fain live and die!

Sometimes His Gracious Voice makes its heard within the heart—with brief words it is tr for intense love is usually brief, but with utteran precious past belief; and the soul which can tr say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," know how to answer faithfully. It will learn converse in His own ineffable language, and wh all merely natural sounds are hushed within it, cry out with the bride, "Let me hear Thy Vo for sweet is Thy Voice."[2]

But this is not all. The stamp of His lov visits is left on some of His favoured ones in suf ing, it may be a secret or an open wound, whichever it be, that pain is the most sacred of His gifts, and He will not fail to dwell Himself every wound He inflicts. But it is a sole question to ask yourself, whether you are wor to receive such visits from your Lord? There point when the Holy Spirit's love and condesc sion seem to pass all human understanding, the soul can but cry out, "Thou hast ravished heart; I am sick of love."[3] If, indeed, it sho be His Holy Will to visit your soul with s favours, give good heed that you accept them w fitting gratitude and a prepared heart—the s may easily forfeit them for lack of this. Striv maintain the deepest inward humility and c *sciousness of* your own unworthiness; thereby

[1] *Cant. ii. 6.* [2] Cant. ii. 14. [3] Cant. iv. 9, v. 8

will become more able to receive and taste the sweetness of His Gifts, and if you should be tempted to glory in them, bethink you that it may be they are given because your weak and scanty holiness needs so powerful a stimulus. Perhaps God visits you thus lovingly, because He knows you to be so feeble that you would sink under the trials and crosses through which He leads others of His children. Be extremely watchful that you receive even these Divine favours in a spirit of detachment; beware of allowing your heart to cleave selfishly to them; stand as it were humbly afar off, retire within yourself, remembering that you have no claim to them. Or if it helps you more, be content to lie passive, saying, "Let Him do as seemeth good in His eyes. His delights are to be with the sons of men." I accept everything—if He will that I taste of His sweetness; "I sat thus under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste."[1] Above all, strive to be equally ready to receive such graces, or to be deprived of them, as He wills, neither desiring them eagerly when withheld, or seeking self in them when granted.

There are other ways in which God's Holy Spirit visits the soul, as when He enlightens the understanding with "the spirit of knowledge," teaching it to know God better, enabling it to gaze upon the depths of His Wisdom, His Love, His Purity—or upon the mysteries of His Providence. "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of

[1] Cant. ii. 3.

God."[1] "The things of God knoweth no man, l
the Spirit of God;" but the brightness of His Li
can show us that which is inaccessible to hun
perceptions. So that the Light sets forth ir
wholly new way the mysteries of the faith;
marvels of the Holy Trinity, the ineffable unio
the Word with the flesh, the wondrous prese
of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament,
secrets of sanctifying grace; until all these, wl
before were but seen as in a glass darkly, bec
lit up by a brightness beyond even the gras
faith, and the soul seems merged in marvel
contemplation. Or it may be that the gif
knowledge will show the soul its own nakedi
and corruption, its natural enmity to God,
inherent deformity and proneness to evil, the st
of original sin, its individual wounds, the helpl
ness of any self-applied remedy. And after
playing all this, God's Gracious Spirit teaches
soul how yet He condescends to unite Himsel
this mass of corruption, drawing it out of its de
dation, purifying it, loving it with a Divine I
which must win our love in return, poor as
love may be. But remember that however v
drously the Holy Spirit may enlighten your un
standing, your soul is not necessarily sanct
thereby. Such intellectual light does not in
ably impart grace to the will—it may fall on
unholy as well as on the pure, even as the s
rays light up foul places no less than choice g
Remember, too, that such privileges may ten
foster pride. The rebel angels fell owing to

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 10.

greatness of their knowledge, and you too may easily fall if you lose sight of your own danger. It is natural to man to take credit to himself for the excellence of what he sees, rather than to refer it all to God. Do you reflect seriously on the responsibility of such light which ought to advance your personal holiness; you will be judged according to your knowledge, therefore give good heed to make it the standard of your actions, and so far from resting in self-complacency upon the light you have received, tremble lest your life fall short thereof. Your light is no more your own than was your darkness, and you are most safe when you mistrust all startling lights which seem to spring from self, and therefore are probably mere delusions.

Neither must we forget the visits God's Holy Spirit is apt to pay to His servants in severity—a severity often proportioned to the purity He would have them share. Even as He tried His servant Job, so the Lord often tries the soul He destines to attain holiness—love taking the form of severity to such as are precious in His Sight. It may be that He strips the soul of all those marked favours which He had once conferred upon it; it would seem as though He had so graciously come to dwell in His servant's soul merely now to forsake it, taking away all the glory and gladness He had brought with Him. The soul's songs of triumph are turned to groans, darkness seems to come over it, the heart seems hardened, the will perverse, all is wretchedness and misery—the very memory of past blessings *fades away.* Or it may be the Voice of God

inwardly reproaches the soul for all its faithlessness, or He may seem to give it up a prey to temptations on all sides. If in any of these ways God's Holy Spirit should visit you, give good heed that you wait patiently. His graces were undeserved blessings, and you have no right to murmur because He takes them away. If He rebukes you, listen and be silent, accepting the most humiliating reproof. He is a kindly Guide, Who tells you the truth in mercy. And if He permits you to be tried by temptations, receive them as willingly as you received His favours. Trials are but another shape in which He manifests His Love to you, and they will prove no less effectual to the purification of your soul, if it be His Will to visit you in that way. Come as He may see fit, "He visiteth the earth and blesseth it, and maketh it to bring forth plenteously."

XVI.

Union with God through Suffering.

Ye that fear the Lord, wait for His Mercy."—Ecclus. ii. 7.

ALL through Holy Scripture we find union of the soul with God pressed upon us as the great aim and object of our earthly probation. The very key-note of all our Saviour's teaching is, 'Abide in Me, and I in you," followed by the precious promise, "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him;" while on the other hand we are met by the fearful threat, "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered . . . . and cast into the fire and burned." The Saviour's desire to unite His creatures to Himself is infinite, nor has He left us without a corresponding desire. Every soul has a secret yearning to Him as its Creator, the Source of its being; and further still, union with Christ is the highest aspiration of every mind, quickened by the Holy Spirit, to a sense of the spiritual world; all prayer, meditation, and communion has this object for its end. So far all is well, but many who seek after this union fall into the error of supposing it to consist of nought save sweetness and illumination, wherein their part is solely one of enjoyment. In a measure this is true, the blessedness of union with

God is sweeter than all conceivable delights, but at the same time it is inseparably bound up with pain and suffering, however these may be tempered by His Grace. Nor are these external sufferings, but rather those interior trials which penetrate to the very depths of the soul. Whoever would attain union with God must accept the truth that suffering and loss are imperative conditions of any such blessings.

There are different ways by which the soul is united to God. In some cases it is, so to say, through darkness. "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and He hath set darkness in my paths."[1] Then the soul sees and understands nothing of what God is doing within, but is content with the certainty that it is united to God, and wholly filled with Him.

Another very lively sense of union causes the soul to realise both His Presence and His Sweetness and consolations; while a third consists chiefly in an overflowing peace which comprehends all other spiritual gifts; and yet a further form which this union may take is through a never-changing gaze for ever fixed on God.

All these conditions are distinguishable by the soul, but there is a union which it cannot perceive. It may be "rooted and built up in Him," and yet unconsciously so. Even as a tree breasts the storm because its roots are fixed deep within the soil, so this soul is hidden and rooted in God, though its union may be perceptible only in purity of life and readiness to suffer for His Glory, such

[1] Job xix. 8.

as could not exist without this union. Then there is a union of the will—that is habitual and voluntary conformity to God's Will; and lastly, there is a union wherein the soul becomes absorbed in God, and this can only be wrought through great suffering, so that theologians call it the purificative union.

If you would advance in the hidden life you must accept this great truth, that perfect union with God can only be won at a heavy cost. Remember at what cost Jesus raised His Adorable Humanity to perfect conformity with His Godhead; and following afar off, all His faithful servants have been called on to suffer in their measure. Even as metal has to be purged by the fire before it is capable of becoming red hot, so the soul must be purified by suffering before it can receive the likeness of God, and attain to a true union with Him.

When the first attraction begins, the soul suffers grievously by reason of all its imperfections; every instant brings some fresh proof of these. "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."[1] This hindrance, whatsoever it be, is an intolerable weight, and earthly corruption becomes a very torture, withholding the soul from that union to which it is irresistibly drawn. And when, after a while, suffering has done its work, and the soul begins to be united to God, the light of His Purity still shows many a hitherto unperceived imperfection, and these are felt more burdensome as the

[1] Rom. vii. 23.

soul, being drawn nearer to God, now sees sin more and more as He sees it. Even when suffering has purged the soul from all voluntary and deliberate faults, and it is truly and firmly united to God, there is not yet an end to suffering. The soul may not be conscious of any definite sin, or even of any voluntary imperfection, but it will yet cry out with S. Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Closer union with God brings a yet keener inward pain, as His Purity would expel all lingering traces of sin; nor will such merciful suffering ever cease to try the soul until it be rendered meet for union with God. "Behold I have refined thee, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."[1] All this may prove to us that a mere sense of sweetness is not necessarily any proof of a true union with God, though it may be His working within the soul which is designed to lead it on to such union. We may stand before a fire and feel its genial warmth without being consumed by it, but once in it, becoming part of it, our bodies would inevitably be consumed, and that with great suffering. Even so with God. He is a consuming fire, "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow;"[2] and acceptable as the warmth of that fire may be, the agony of purification thereby is keen. The "green olive tree may be fair and of goodly fruit," but "He hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken."[3]

[1] *Isa. xlviii. 10.* [2] Heb. iv. 12. [3] Jer. xi. 16.

Or if we can suppose the soul to be purified from the last remains of human imperfection, it would not then even be free from suffering, since a fresh agony would arise from that intense "desire to depart and be with Christ," of which S. Paul speaks. Such a soul must suffer, because all present enjoyment is but as a drop which rather excites than satisfies the burning thirst for Him which consumes it; it suffers because it fain would see that Divine Lover Who draws it with such powerful chains, yet is unseen; it suffers because each moment of delay, before entering into His Presence to abide for ever with Him, is intolerable; because while ceaselessly longing and struggling to fly hence and rest for ever at His Feet, it is powerless to attain thither; because however close its union with God may be, while this life lasts separation might be possible. No; from every point of view the soul cannot attain true union with God save by the path of suffering.

Moreover, there is another condition to this union —absolute self-renunciation. Perfect union with God is destructive as well as purificative; He wills that the soul be given up to Him wholly stripped of all things, even of all desire to will, until S. Paul's words be fulfilled in it, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This involves a total loss of freedom, the soul becomes incapable of any individual action, it is captive to the Spirit of God, from Whom it receives every impression, every power of movement, and yet it becomes more perfectly, really free when it has given itself up to His holy inspirations. Thus it is captive externally, being bound by the most absolute *obedience* to God, but free as regards all

earthly creatures and worldly maxims, which it wholly renounced and wholly disregards. It is this that consists "the liberty wherewith Christ h made us free," for S. Paul tells us that "where Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Again, in this union the soul loses all th individual intentions and emanations of self- which often influence our conduct towards G "He hath destroyed me on every side, and I gone, and my hope hath He removed like a tre The soul passes, as it were, unto God, forsakin personal aims and desires; sometimes even it l the power of definite thought, and lies, as it w prostrate in self-abhorrence before Him, or in low veneration of His Greatness. "The day of the l is darkness and not light,"[2] and all earthly kn ledge is lost in the depths of His Wondrous Infi But the most blessed loss of all is when the s having passed through all these stages of prep tion, is lost itself, and is "changed into God's In from glory to glory."[3] This wondrous transfor tion is the last step whereby the soul "loses itse God," and those to whom such grace is given indeed bear even the outward impress of Likeness; they seem to move in an atmosphe heavenly peace and tranquillity, even-tempe gentle, patient, uplifted from all earthly anxie Thrice blessed they who are thus lost and found themselves in God.

But in striving to live a life of union with Gc is most needful to guard against self-confidence, to remember that this blessed state is easily

[1] *Job xix. 10.* [2] Amos v. 18. [3] 2 Cor. iii. 1

turbed by any trifling fault, if voluntary. So pure a union is incompatible with the slightest unfaithfulness towards God, and without diligence and watchfulness the soul will soon fall away into its native impurity. Once more, to use the simile of iron heated in the furnace, how soon when drawn away from the fire the glow forsakes it, and its actual darkness and coldness return.

You should often prove the reality of your union with God. Involuntary faults, the remains of human weakness, will cling about men so long as they are mortal. God does not withdraw Himself from us because of these, so long as the heart and will do not consent to them. But if our faults are deliberate, or continually recurring even when trifling, there is great cause to fear that the union is unreal and a delusion. It is a good rule in all we do to think less of the duty to be fulfilled than of how we may keep close to God while fulfilling it, so that our hearts may be more engrossed by Him than our hands with work. The work will prosper none the less, and we shall grow in union with God the more. Nothing so raises the tone of a life, or so promotes its sanctification, as doing all one has to do in and through God, the very Principle and Essence of all good. Nor is there any presumption in such an aim—the weaker and more abject you feel yourself to be, the greater you will feel your need of Him. What else can lift you up? The muddy rivulet does not pollute the sea, but is lost in its vastness and purity. All cleansing of the soul is good, but this life of union is the source and *spring of all* purification. It is what He gives us

in the Blessed Sacrament, wherein He dwells in us and we in Him. If He deigns so to unite us to Himself by giving us Himself, "shall He not also freely give us all things?" Only never forget that it is for our self-abasement, not for our elevation, that God unites Himself with us, and the deeper that self-abasement is, so much the closer and more perfect will be your union with God.

XVII.

Of Eternal Perdition.

"Your sins have hid His Face from you."—Isa. lix. 2.

WE have seen that union with God cannot be attained in this life without suffering, whether it be while the soul is still seeking that union, or after having attained to it. But who can fathom the fearful torment of that soul which has incurred an eternal separation from God? Not that I would here allude to those material pains of hell with which our imagination is filled when we hear of that place of torment, but rather to one consequence of eternal perdition which infinitely surpasses all that human sense or imagination can perceive—the penalty of everlasting exclusion from God's Presence, the eternal loss of Him. The lost soul being for ever drawn towards that God Whom nevertheless it cannot reach, is one ceaseless agony, and in this lies the essential suffering of eternal damnation.

God, we all know, is the ultimate end of the soul, and as such He is ever drawing it to Himself by a powerful irresistible attraction; and the soul, in like manner, cannot but tend towards Him, the source of its being, so that it never can be free from an urgent desire for union with Him. What earthly

cry of agony can ever so faintly shadow forth the bitterness of anguish with which the soul, having quitted the body and desiring to be united with God, yet finds itself cast forth from His Presence for ever,—that hopeless despairing cry, "My God! my God!" In this life the soul may have been so cumbered by earthly and material grossness as to be unconscious of that wondrous attraction to God, but when once the clog of the body is cast off, it will dart with irresistible vehemence towards Him. It is as a burning thirst, a gnawing hunger, a breathless struggle, a ceaseless moan, "My God! my God!" while on His part, God, by His very nature and attributes, draws His creature to Himself. But, nevertheless, fearful as the thought is, that longing will never be fulfilled for the lost soul—through all eternity it must ever hear the awful words, "Not for thee, not for thee!"

Then, vainly struggling with its own impotence, the tortured soul is fain madly to desire that there were no God, if while He exists, and itself is banished from His Presence, it is doomed to suffer thus; it struggles against the love for Him which has now become a torment, it would hate Him; it resists and fights against its sentence all in vain. If only it might burst its prison, now too late, it believes itself capable of forcing the very gates of Paradise to reach its God. Then when all efforts are hopeless, blasphemy, passion, and wrath are all its food. Despair is on all sides. The soul remembers God's Justice and despairs of mercy; *His Love,* and despairs of grace; it remembers *Heaven's Glory,* and despairs of entering therein;

it thinks of the joy of the blessed ones with whom once it was associated, and despairs of sharing their blessedness. It knows that God is Eternal, and that through all eternity it will be banished from Him, from His blessed saints, and from His Glory. Moreover, this cruel banishment is aggravated by the remembrance that while there was yet time the soul had every aid from grace through which to seek and find God, and that nought save its own self-will, its own hardness of heart, hindered it from attaining that blessedness which is now hopeless. The miserable soul can behold from afar off that lost blessedness ; such fruitless contemplation is all now left to it, and the separation of which it is conscious is its true hell, for could one ray of God's love reach that suffering soul, Heaven would at once be there.

Reflect that one mortal sin may bring all this misery upon you ; that already you deserve hell ; that there are now souls in hell whose earthly lives were better than yours has been, their sins less grievous than yours. Ponder over these things and tremble lest you be not of the number of God's Elect, lest your sins should forfeit His Love. Say to yourself, "If I am not speedily and wholly converted to God, such may be my lot. Perhaps I have not another year between me and my eternal condemnation," and with such awful thoughts before you, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

XVIII.

On Vows and their Object.

"*I will pay my vows unto the Lord.*"—Ps. cxvi. 16.

THERE is an error into which some of th who have consecrated their lives to God namely, that having taken the vows of relig they have finished their work, and no more rem to be done. But this is a grievous mistake, those who fall into it confound the means with end. Vows are merely means of attaining an The external practice of Poverty, Chastity, Obedience are means towards the attainmen the same virtues in a higher spiritual sense, for want of realising this many souls fall shor the grace of their vocation. It is a step in the r direction to renounce the perishable gifts pleasures of this world for God's Sake, and submit the will to that of another; but perfec lies in somewhat much deeper than this. Vows of religion are but as a foundation on wh to build the beautiful edifice of religious perfect and that cannot be accomplished without spiri Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience.

Spiritual poverty involves the renunciation o interior possessions, and of all self-consciousn *He is truly poor* in spirit who is willing to

rived of all knowledge, light, or consolations, l that not solely as the result of union with God. metimes God Himself takes away all the gifts erewith He had enriched a soul. "Lest I strip er naked, and set her as in the day she was born, nd make her a wilderness, and set her like a dry and, and slay her with thirst."[1] This may be to et forth His Supreme Power, or to teach the soul hat all blessings come from Him, or to purify it, or as a chastisement, teaching it not to make idols to itself, to "worship the work of its own hands."[2]

At other times Satan impoverishes the soul through its own passions, or chokes the good seed, leaving the heart empty and unfruitful; or the soul brings about its own poverty by throwing away the gifts of grace with which God hath endowed it. Heedlessness and levity are flood-gates through which spiritual blessings soon flow away, and the soul is left poor and barren. Holy thoughts vanish, consolations cease, love is stifled, light clouded. But all such poverty of spirit is the soul's own work through self-indulgence and slackness.

Or spiritual poverty may be caused less by a real loss of these gifts than by the soul's incapacity for using them. This is a higher form of poverty, and more difficult to use well; it is easier to bear the loss of interior gifts than to use them without any excessive clinging to their possession, and consequently this form of spiritual poverty is found only among those who have advanced so far in perfection, that amid the most abundant gifts of grace they are like S. Paul, "having nothing, and yet

[1] *Hos.* ii. 3. [2] Mic. v. 13.

possessing all things." But if men seek themselv and their personal satisfaction even in spiritu things, God often deprives them of His gifts, save those gifts from abuse, leaving their poss sion to such as are really poor in spirit, and detach even from spiritual consolations. Above all he poor in spirit who is free from all self-consciousne Bear in mind that *being* poor in spirit is v different from *having* a poor spirit—this last impl mere barrenness and emptiness.

Spiritual chastity is another point of perfect set before us. S. Peter bids his disciples "gird the loins of their mind," and put aside whate may in the smallest degree sully the soul's pur All ill-regulated longings, excessive clinging earthly friendships, over-indulged tenderness, whi as S. Augustine says, make the soul "adhesive," sullying. Even an unrestrained delight in spirit consolations may prevent holy things, and to spiritually chaste the soul must not only abst from all merely natural affections, but it m receive interior sweetness and light in a calm s restrained way, and be ever ready to give up such delights, and to rest in God only.

Of course all obedience depends upon the mi but spiritual obedience is not merely the volunt subjection of the understanding to a Superior's v it is rather the obedience of our earthly spirit to Spirit of Grace. This obedience is never dea the motions of grace, rather it is so watchful a keen that no whisper, however faint, escapes it, a *that* because it fears lest the Master should cc *suddenly and* find the door shut. And though

Spirit of grace is sometimes silent, true spiritual obedience holds it a duty to be ever listening, so as to be ready to obey the faintest call. Moreover, such an obedient spirit accepts and follows blindly every utterance of grace in the deepest love and awe, receiving all such as God's Own Word, and shrinking unspeakably from choosing its own path. It acts promptly and faithfully, counting a tardy obedience as little better than disobedience ; and thus yielding itself up a passive instrument in the Hand of the Divine Workman, the soul becomes wholly imbued with God's Will as its end and object.

But if you take a lower standard, and are satisfied with the external fulfilment of Religious Vows, you will be constrained to admit that heathen philosophers and Vestals practised as rigid poverty and chastity, and that the obedience of the Roman soldier was as absolute as your own. Nor does the outward expression of a voluntary renunciation of property, sensual pleasures, and independence convey any special grace. Perfection can scarcely be found in a mere negative.

Moreover, although there must be somewhat external whereby these graces are tested, their life and essence must be inward and spiritual. Now the actual Vows concern that which is external only ; men's worldly goods, their bodies and their liberty, and, if perfection were the result of these Vows, spiritual progress would be at an end. So soon as they were taken heartily and with a pure intention, the mere beginner would have all that *years of striving* can give to patience and earnest-

ness. But in truth Vows are only means to remove those hindrances on the path of perfection which are most powerful in deterring men from their noblest aim.

Granting then that Religious Vows are but a means, he who takes them sincerely is bound diligently to use them to their true end. Natural poverty is of little avail save as teaching that spiritual poverty which fills the soul with abundant riches. "Their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."[1] He who has voluntarily renounced all earthly possessions is more apt to conceive the blessing of that loss of all things for Christ of which S. Paul speaks,[2] the loss of all which is not God. The Vow of Chastity is simply a means to spiritual purity; the greater following upon the less. Spiritual purity is an impossibility as combined with material impurity. In like manner external Obedience forms the soul to the higher obedience to grace. He who knows how to obey a fellow-creature because that fellow-creature is God's representative to him, is thereby trained to receive the higher law of obedience to God's Holy Spirit, and the leadings of grace. Without these higher aims the Vows are worthless, with them they are the soul's apprenticeship leading to a higher life. Woe, indeed, to those who fix their gaze on the earth and miss the great end set before them. That end our Dear Lord Himself has set before all His servants. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom

[1] *2 Cor. viii. 2.* [2] Phil. iii. 8.

of Heaven." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God."

But we must never lose sight of the fact that the mere Vows will not procure us the fulness of heavenly riches, union with God, and perfect subjection to His Will, which are the ultimate object of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. Abject poverty is compatible with spiritual pride or intellectual self-complacency; a pure body does not necessarily exclude all ill-regulated affections, and a visible external obedience may exist in fellowship with an insubordinate roving imagination. Let these virtues once be spiritualised, and all is changed. God will fill the spiritually poor in heart with His own treasures; He will unite the pure in heart to Himself, and work all His Holy Will in the soul which is spiritually obedient to His Voice. What is the one object of a Religious? Is it not to have God his sole possession, and to be possessed solely by God, to be united to Christ through a close spiritual union, to be His servant and slave in all things? But without spiritual Poverty this mutual possession cannot exist; without spiritual Chastity the soul cannot become Christ's spouse; without spiritual Obedience there will be no true "captivity of our members to Christ."

"Who is sufficient for these things?" Well might we despair if it depended on ourselves to attain such supernatural heights. They can only be reached by the grace of God's Holy Spirit, to

Whom we must have recourse, wholly mistrusting ourselves. He will strip us, cleanse us, bring us into captivity. He is a consuming Fire, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He will have "every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

XIX.

On Exact Observance of Rule.

"As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them."—GAL. vi. 16.

THERE are two errors peculiar to those who aim at perfection, both of which are very dangerous; first, that common things are unimportant; and secondly, as a natural result the vanity and pride of man's heart seeks out some new and peculiar paths, which are sure to end in loss and hindrance. The first of these mistakes leads some persons to despise a strict observance of Rule, as being a very ordinary matter; while the other induces them, while neglecting that which is a real duty, to seek perfection by self-chosen means without their Rule. Now I would lay down as an unfailing principle that a Religious will best attain perfection by observance of Rule, and that without such observance his perfection will be delusive and unreal.

Rules are a necessary element of the religious life, the means whereby it may be perfected. S. Bernard says that a good Religious looks upon his Rule as a teacher to be consulted on every occasion. The essential character of perfection is to be well-regulated in all things, and this can only be attained by the help of an external rule. This, of course,

varies with different people and different conditi
of life; he who seeks mere human perfection
consult reason as his rule; the Christian will t
the precepts of God and the Church for his r
while the Religious must follow his special Rul
order to attain perfection in his Vocation.
character even of his Vows is influenced by th
rules; thus S. Bernard says that the Religiou
his Profession does not promise an indefinite ob
ence, but obedience to his Rule, the true limit
fulfilment of his Vows. The Rule of an Order i
important to its well-being that it is not allow
for a Superior to dispense with it save where h
permitted to do so by the very Rule itself, to
strict observance of which he is himself absolu
bound as all the other Religious are. Suarez
that a Rule is essential to the Religious Life, bec
a firm intention of obedience is a necessary c
ponent part of it; and S. Bernard says that he
takes the Vows thereby assumes a burden whic
has no power to lay down again. But, unquest
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one—their necessity only exists with respec
Religious perfection, as the channels of grace to th
who follow them. All the movements of grace h
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external objects, through the words of a fell
creature, through sorrows, or through blessin
but whatever channel God may appoint for
Grace, we are bound to receive it in that way
no other, even as we receive the gift of Regenerat
Forgiveness of sins and union with Christ are g

through the sacraments appointed for those special ends. In like manner it is obvious that the special channels of grace for the Religious are found in his Rule. It is the very source of grace and holiness to him, and generally those who are most diligent in their observance are the most fervent and keenest in spiritual things; whereas such persons as are careless in the practice of Rule generally become languid and slack, perhaps even they lose their taste for the Religious Life, and grow estranged from God by a multitude of troubles and perplexities. One may say with truth that in all ways the happiness of a Religious depends on obedience to his Rule. "He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul."[1]

Observance of the Rule implies strength; great vigour and energy are needed to keep a Rule steadily and constantly; laxity slips in so easily in what is no matter of feeling. It implies patience; those who are less strict will always be ready to contradict and even to condemn the obedient, whose life is a reproach to themselves. It implies gentleness towards others; destruction of all self-will, which would naturally clash with the Rule and the will of Superiors; mortification of the senses; and a constant aim at perfectly keeping the Vows, because the Rule teaches us to seek poverty even in the most trifling matters; to emulate angelic purity, and to regard the slightest intimation of a Superior's will.

Such an observance is a true spiritual captivity, binding us with a chain of duties throughout the

[1] Prov. xix. 16.

day, and it promotes recollection as the natural result of a life of silence and mortification. So, too, does it promote an intimate communion with God, because the heart is withdrawn from external distractions, and ready to be filled with Him Alone.

Nor must we pass over the fact that those who seek to promote their sanctification by self-chosen ways are under a delusion. We find some zealous restless people who affect to do more than their Rule enjoins—prayers and mortifications, but who all the while are working their own will, neglecting what is really incumbent on them, much given to talk, deficient in reticence, disposed to manœuvre, and if not actually despising Rule, yet acting as though they were superior to it. But all this is a self-chosen path, and it is a principle in all theology that he who forsakes God's manifest Will, in order to do that which God has not made manifest, is guilty of self-will; we cannot serve two masters, or obey God's Will and our own. Every Religious will grant that it is God's Will that he should obey that Rule to which he has voluntarily pledged himself; but it is not so evident that his self-chosen austerities or labours are God's Will; above all, if in order to accomplish them he must neglect his Rule. A man who persists in thus following his own ideas of perfection will become unreal in meditation, self-seeking in austerities, ill regulated in spiritual exercises, and he will be a scandal to his Community. Self-will is the very poison of all spiritual life.

All true perfection is the work of God's Holy *Spirit.* Christian perfection is a supernatural

undertaking altogether beyond man's strength, and God will assuredly vouchsafe to help him more therein through those means which He has given. Duties and rules are the very foundation of holiness. Be sure then that if you habitually neglect your Rule, you are not living under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and your long prayers, your zeal, your penances are a delusion. If He were guiding you, He would guide you to obey your Rule. Those who give way to disobedience are wont to betray unmortified passions and earthly tempers; naturally enough, for self-will becomes their rule, and it pollutes all they do and say.

Nor must we forget that a faithful observance of the Rule is attainable by every one, which makes neglect thereof more inexcusable. It is not always in a man's power to conquer his passions, however earnestly he may strive, or to lead an interior life, as many a pious soul will sorrowfully admit; but it is in our own power to obey the Rule, which depends solely upon the exercise of will; while he who does so sets forward his spiritual life, and disposes his soul to receive God's Gifts and favours. But our human spirit, ever proud and self-seeking, cannot submit to ordinary means, and despising rules as needful only for inferior minds, seeks a refined sublime spirituality of its own; and hence arise endless evils in the Religious Life—scandal, bad example, contempt of duty and authority. Religious may disobey their Rule under every kind of circumstance,—in the Cell, Refectory, Dormitory, Garden or Choir,—and often it is set aside out of mere *human respect*, for fear of giving offence or

of ridicule. But such persons are in truth helping to destroy God's reign among men—and they forget that having voluntarily promised to obey a certain Rule, they will be judged hereafter by that Rule. Nor can his conscience be at rest who indulges in any habitual infraction of the Rule, whether through carelessness or other causes; and he must come to the Sacraments with an unprepared mind. Suarez says that if a Religious deliberately neglects to obey his Rule, he becomes guilty of mortal sin, on the ground that in morals a virtual indirect consent is equivalent to a direct formal consent; and he who wittingly neglects his Rule for any length of time, virtually consents not to seek that perfection to which he is pledged. It is also held to be a mortal sin to despise Rules—and he who neglects them out of indolence and self-love does despise them. Thus S. Bernard says that Rules are means of sanctification to those who observe them, but a source of guilt to such as neglect them. Retirement and prayer must be wearisome to one who breaks his Rules. If he cannot submit his will to a Rule he has voluntarily undertaken, is it likely that he will be able to submit to the finer, more delicate movements of grace? Moreover he is practically breaking his Vows: we rarely find any infraction of Vows which did not begin by disobedience to Rule, and all Religious who have been the cause of scandal to Christ's Church have been despisers of Rule. God sometimes punishes such breach of Rule by letting the culprit proceed to sacrilege by breaking his Vows, and assuredly no heavier judgment could visit the guilty Religious.

XX.

Half-hearted Service.

"*No man can serve two masters.*"—MATT. vi. 24.

AMONG professing Christians some give themselves wholly to the world and its maxims; and some, on the contrary, seek wholly to follow the precepts of the Cross and the Gospel. Neither of these serve two masters. But there is a third class, who even while professing to consecrate their lives to God's service, yet try to reconcile it with that of the world, and to enjoy the privileges of both. Miserable indeed they are, for while the worldly man gains at least what the world can give, and he who seeks Christ is more than satisfied with His service, the man who strives to serve two masters wins no satisfaction from either.

Let us look further into this. Love is generally said to be the centre to which all nature tends, but as a rule the attraction is chiefly that of pleasure. One man delights in literature, another in sport, military matters, or what not, but to each the attraction is the pleasure he finds in that special pursuit, and he is a wretched being who finds no pleasure in anything. But how wretched above all others is the man, who having consecrated his life to God, yet does not give himself unreservedly to

God's service! He cannot find delight in the world, he will not find it in God! We will assume for a moment that you have devoted your life to God, and that you are forcibly drawn to seek spiritual perfection, but still you have a lingering attraction to earthly pleasures. Believe me, it is not possible to satisfy your soul with these. You know full well that however disguised they may be, they are really bitter, even when attained they are encompassed with regret and sorrow, besides being deceitful and uncertain in duration. High sounding in promise, they melt away when you would grasp them; your soul has been endowed with a capacity, a longing for a happiness which can never be satisfied by any earthly delights, even the purest of which are short-lived and soon pass away. Or were we to grant the contrary, and say that earthly pleasures could satisfy the soul, are you, whose existence is dedicated to God, at liberty to seek such satisfaction? While yet you were in the world, you could choose at will, but now you have chosen God's service, the option no longer exists for you. Nor will he allow you to rest in any such consolations; in vain you give way to natural tastes and inclinations, neglect your Rule through self-pleasing, give unbridled liberty to your tongue and your curiosity, seek to win praise or make yourself of consequence; do what you may, God will mercifully send trouble and perplexity to recall you from wandering astray, and there will be no real enjoyment to you in your half-hearted service. Be *honest* with yourself, is it not so? Have you ever *found any* true content in the indulgence of your

earthly and sensual tastes, have they not always turned to bitterness? Have you not lost ground with those whose esteem you sought, when they saw your conduct to be so inconsistent with your profession? Have you not found disappointment in your worldly friendships? Has not your want of discipline brought you into difficulty, your unrestrained speech led to quarrels? Has not self-indulgence and the habit of seeking your own advancement brought suffering and shame upon you? It is thus that God permits us to be chastened by the very things wherein we seek our own satisfaction, so that we often suffer more in their possession than in the deprivation of them. God is a Jealous God, and He will not have those who have chosen Him as their portion revert to the natural life for their happiness; and therefore He strews thorns in their way. "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them, and she shall seek them, but shall not find them. Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now."[1]

But there is another side to the misery of a Religious who gives God but half his heart, and strives to combine His service with that of the world. It is not only that there is no real satisfaction to be found in this last,—worse still, such a man will find no rest in God. He looks for such rest as the legitimate result of his Profession, but in seeking to serve two masters he has cut himself

[1] Hosea ii. 6, 7.

off from both ; there is neither pleasure nor comfo for him in the things of God, any more than in th things of the world. How can a taste for spiritu enjoyment exist in the heart where worldly tast prevail? Who can enjoy light and darkness, c cold and heat simultaneously? "The natural ma receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, fc they are foolishness unto him, neither can he kno them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Talk of the mysteries of the hidden life, the secr leadings of grace, the ineffable communicatior God makes to the soul, of self-mortification an conquest, of detachment from creatures and th blessedness of the Love of Jesus, to one who absorbed in the things of this world and the pleasure of sense :—it will be as though you were speakin to him in an unknown tongue, in spite of h Religious Profession, his Habit, and his Vow The mind which grovels amid earthly thing becomes as material as the body, and cannot rise a will to appreciate heavenly things.

S. Augustine likens the heart to a hand, whic once full, cannot grasp at some fresh object withou letting fall that which it already holds ; and thus he says, the man who loves worldly treasure cannot love Jesus, his heart is full, and he can hol no more. The heart which can rest in earthl pleasures will find but little delight in God ; wer it more fixed on Him those pleasures would no have found so ready an entrance. If a hungry ma has satisfied his appetite with coarse food, he ha *no taste left* for the refined delicacies which may b

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

offered him later; and so the vain pleasures of this life take away the healthy appetite which the soul should have for heavenly things. The essence of enjoyment is union—you cannot enjoy food until it comes in contact with your palate; music gives you no pleasure until it comes in contact with the organ of hearing;—beauty is lost on you until it meets your organ of sight. If all material pleasure is based on the principle of union, far more is all enjoyment of God inseparably founded on union with Him; and all self-indulgence is a complete insurmountable barrier between the soul and its All-pure Creator.

Who would deliberately renounce all hope of enjoying God? What was your object in giving yourself up to Him in the Religious Life, and binding yourself by your Vows? Did you not know that such a life implies a very atmosphere of holiness? Is not the aim of a Religious Life to find God, to draw near to Him and enjoy Him, and would you deprive yourself of this happiness by trifling away your life in worldliness? You may have been a man of prayer, nourished and sustained by communion with God, and yet after years of professing piety you have no knowledge of His sweetness; perhaps, indeed, on looking back to the early days of your conversion you are constrained to ask yourself where is now all "that blessedness which once ye spake of." And conscience answers, it has vanished, because you sought to rest in creatures and in the indulgence of your own will. You have made an enemy of God, Who would fain have been *as a tender Lover* to your soul. He grants many

special favours and graces to those who devote themselves unreservedly to their heavenly Bridegroom. You were all unworthy of such grace, yet He offered it you, but now that you seek to combine His Love with love of the world, how can you presume to hope that He will be with you in your prayers and religious exercises? Nay more, you must dread His wrath. A life so divided between the Creator and the creature can but be displeasing to Him, cause Him to turn away His Face, or only look upon you in wrath and vengeance. Have you ever pondered on this vengeance? It is not sickness or suffering, temptation or trial, it is something far more grievous when God visits those who have taken up the plough and then turned back from His service. When He chastens in love, one hand sustains the weak servant while the other smites; but when grace is withdrawn in wrath, who may venture to depict the terror or fearfulness of such a state. Surely such an one must fall from bad to worse; it is no longer a purifying chastisement but stern wrath; the soul loses all energy, falls become more frequent, spiritual life languishes, devotion becomes a weariness, and though that soul may be conscious of its own downward course, it is incapable of arresting it, because it has frustrated God's Grace and refused to be solely His.

Examine yourself, look well into your lukewarmness, your inaptitude for recollection, your distractions, self-love, and indolence. Are these so many signs of God's wrath and the withdrawal of His Grace, because you have attempted to reconcile *His service* with a life of self-pleasing? Be honest

with yourself, and see whether you have not good cause for sorrow. If so, lose no time in breaking through the trammels of your self-indulgence. You are far worse off than a mere man of the world who makes no profession of godliness. He has at least his reward, but you who seek to serve two masters have no reward, for you know all the while that you are fighting against God, and so your earthly pleasure is embittered, and He withholds all spiritual consolation. In fact, your Religious Profession does but add to your guilt and misery. You would fain enjoy the pleasures of this world which are denied you ; you would fain be less strictly bound by the duties of your condition, but cannot get free. What can be more wretched, or more like the misery of hell, where the lost are doomed perpetually to sigh after the joys from which they are eternally cut off? But it is your own fault. You sought to live two incompatible lives—to enjoy God and the creature, to enjoy social intercourse, material comforts, freedom and ease, while following the holy practices of your Vocation, and it cannot be. Those things which should be your delight are your misery. Recollection, meditation, self-examination, silence, solitude, study, should be your happiness ; some even find an earthly Paradise in these, but to you they are wearisome. You are for ever distracted by the strife within—your heart is a perpetual battlefield. God fills you with reproach, unrest, and bitterness, and from disgust at your duties you may go on to doubt whether you are in your true Vocation. You will curtail your devotions, *or at least* perform them carelessly, and the

certain end will be some grievous fall. All this danger you incur if, as a Religious, you do not give yourself wholly to God; these are the fruits of a divided service, of striving to serve two masters. Will you not resolve to be God's only, to give Him an undivided heart? Is it not a light thing to renounce all human delights if thereby you may enjoy Him? If then you have strayed, listen to His call, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" He is as loving as He is Holy, and He ceases not to bid you return to Him. Listen to His Voice, recollect yourself inwardly, and cast aside those follies which led you astray. Let experience teach you to shun the hollow joys of which you have proved the bitterness. Rest in God, where alone you can never find disappointment, weariness, or loss.

XXI.

The Danger of Carelessness.

"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully."—JER. xlviii. 10.

THERE is nothing more perilous than the condition of a Religious who does not strive after perfection. It may be answered that God's Commandments are surely more binding than the Counsels of Perfection, and that those who are not labouring to attain the higher aim, fail rather from carelessness, want of strength of character, or some such causes, than from any bad intentions. No doubt such persons lose the greater good which has been set before them, but surely their condition is one of far less peril than that of men living in mortal sin.

Unquestionably, in itself, nothing is so harmful to the soul as mortal sin, yet there have been cases in which its results were turned to the soul's profit. S. Ambrose says that when a man has fallen more owing to natural infirmity than evil intention, he is often so stung with remorse that he makes supernatural efforts to amend and atone for his past sin, and thus his past faults become a stimulus to his progress in holiness. But when a Religious neglects *to aim* at perfection, the cause is seldom

so much that natural infirmity which leads a man into some act of mortal sin, but rather a perverse will deliberately rejecting the motions of grace; and therefore God, Who knows the heart of man, and distinguishes between malice and weakness, deals less severely with sins of infirmity or impetuosity than with those arising from a want of stedfast will to serve and please Him. Habitual slackness is more destructive than casual acts of mortal sin; these last carry their own terror and warning, while the many trifling sins which accumulate where there is no effort to attain perfection, do not startle the conscience, and often pass unnoticed. Thus the soul falls into a state of habitual sin, and of all things this is the most perilous.

One of the great dangers of such a state is that it blinds a man to his own sin; his conscience makes but little protest against what is so much a matter of course, and he deludes himself with the belief that he has no evil intentions, he only intends to relieve himself in some measure from weariness and constraint; consent of the will is the chief strength of sin, he tells himself, and he has no will to offend God. But this is a lamentable error. The true nature of sin is no way changed by its smoothness, rather it becomes blacker and guiltier because the heart's inclination yields readily to it, deluding the sinner with the idea that he is not exceeding lawful bounds.

If while you live in any habitual sin you flatter yourself that your will does not consent, you deceive yourself. What amount of will involves *sin? Must* the will necessarily be urgently bent on

evil? Such determinate sin is rare, while any consent to what is wrong (and there cannot fail to be such a consent where habitual sin exists) is enough to peril your soul. It is no answer to say, that you do not intend to do wrong, and are not conscious that you consent to sin. You must be judged, not by feelings or words, but by your actions, and if you give way to the impulses of an ill-regulated mind, if you indulge your natural inclinations, and please yourself as far as lies in your power, most assuredly your will is in fault. S. Augustine says that if a man sins because he is free, he must not attribute his sin to that freedom, but to his own evil will. The mischief all arises from the habit of yielding in little things, from slackness in pursuing your bounden aim—Religious Perfection.

Moreover, all the while you are resisting grace. Nothing so prevents us from doing this as the belief that it is a sin, but the moment we do wrong, persuading ourselves that we are not sinning, we despise all the motions of grace, and our own preconceived idea blinds us to the warnings of conscience and the whisperings of God's Holy Spirit.

Habitual sin betrays itself when a Religious is careless in striving to fulfil every duty as perfectly as possible, and yet denies that he is doing wrong. Perhaps he will say that many others who make a great profession of piety do not worry themselves about little things; they do not abstain from material comforts, worldly friendships or interests; and why *should* not he do the like? Why should

he not fairly presume that what other good people do is innocent? Why should he set up a higher standard than his neighbours? Thus he hardens his conscience, and wilfully neglects his perfection. But we may be sure that the common broad path is seldom that of perfection, and even among those who are called out of the world, only those find it who are content to tread the narrow uphill path of self-denial. All real holiness must come out of the refining furnace of trial and self-conflict.

Another form of self-deceit is when a man says that assuredly he would rather give up everything than be guilty of any grievous sin, and resting satisfied with this conviction, he is not very particular about mere everyday trifles, even though they do tell directly upon perfection. It is a poor excuse for carelessness in little things, to say that all the while we abhor great sin;—yet practically this is the excuse some men make for themselves. They say, such trifles as looks or words, passing inclinations and self-indulgences, are surely not worth so much ado. But is anything trifling to those whose law of life is, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect?" And is not the Religious pledged to strive after perfection in all things? Moreover very grievous results often follow upon indulged venial sin, because God looks at the hidden intentions of the heart, and there may be more wilful evil there in a continued habit of some seemingly trifling sin, than in some sudden weightier act, the result of infirmity or surprise.

One great danger which such careless persons

incur, is that their conscience grows hardened, and they go on quietly and without anxiety, taking for granted that all is right. Too often as the soul's condition grows worse, its false security increases, for want of that warmth of heavenly love which would rouse and recall it from its wanderings. There are two kinds of false peace in which the soul may be lulled to its destruction; one which is the work of the devil, and takes the shape of earthly sensual delight, soothing the soul into a fatal lethargy and blinding it utterly; and another which, though it seems to come from God, is very unlike His true peace, arising as it does from His Voice being silent within the heart, and leaving it to its own evil ways. S. Augustine says that it is a sign of God's exceeding wrath when He permits sin; but when He leaves it unpunished, and allows the soul to slumber in the fascinations of guilt, that is tenfold worse. His greatest mercy is when He alarms and chastens the soul, forcing it to turn away from the lures of sin. In truth the uneasiness which an erring soul experiences is God's sending, and it is a welcome proof that He has not yet rejected that soul as unworthy of His Mercies, but watches over it, that it be not blinded with false peace. Habitual negligence, however, and the lack of a constant high aim, are nearly sure to pave the way for such delusive peace, and the unwise man who is so blinded neither perceives nor resists it. "Fools make a mock at sin,"[1] and "a haughty spirit goeth before a fall."[2] Sometimes, while all around are aghast at a man's conduct, he alone

[1] *Prov. xiv. 9.* [2] Prov. xvi. 18.

does not see that he is wrong ; evil-doing seems to have become part of his nature, and he no longer feels the weight of his guilt. The careless man may be less guilty than the determined sinner, but there is this in common between them, that they are alike insensible to their danger and inaccessible to all that might enlighten and reclaim them. Prayer, Holy Communion, spiritual guidance, even trials, are all so many means by which God in His Mercy deals with the wandering soul to reclaim it, as well as in perfecting those that are stedfast in the paths of holiness; but all such helps are thrown away upon him who has hardened his conscience till he considers it needless labour to aim at spiritual perfection. He will despise all such means of grace as trifling and useless, because they are common to all men, and have no special attraction for him, and thus day by day he will deteriorate from the standard God has placed before him.

In truth it is easier to convert a heinous sinner and mould him to holiness, than to reclaim such a man as this, who while he is pledged voluntarily to a holy life, wilfully neglects to fulfil his obligations. The converted sinner will be keenly alive to his own guilt, readier to condemn himself than others are to condemn him ; he will use to the utmost all the help set before him—confession, instruction, good books, which are new to him, and have a powerful and beneficial influence upon him. But the Religious who has slackened in his pursuit of perfection sees nothing very startling in his own *faults; he* persuades himself that all is right—he *means well*—there is no occasion to change his way

of going on. His religious exercises have become perfunctory and do not touch his heart, and as S. Augustine says, "It is easier to convert a sinner than to soften a hardened spirit."

But even short of this, the slack Religious loses infinitely,—God looks with special lovingkindness on the efforts made by His servants to please Him. Men of the world are His servants, but the consecrated soul is His Bride, and as such He prizes its love and service more peculiarly; and in like manner carelessness and lukewarmness are more displeasing in such than in others. "Unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required." If a man of the world goes through life regardless of God's Commandments, you would not hesitate to pronounce him to be in a bad way and risking his salvation. His duty is clear, his neglect thereof gross. And so it is with the Religious, as respects a higher duty, that of striving after perfection, and he who neglects this sins against light and knowledge. Examine yourself, search out your conscience, and judge whether you have so striven hitherto. Has the endeavour been your chief thought and aim? Or have you grown slack, and led an unedifying life, setting a bad example to others,—or even ridiculed those who were more in earnest, whose life was a reproach to you? If it be so, beware, for yours is a perilous condition, and your own conscience will bear witness against you. If you are young, use your early freshness in seeking the blessed paths of perfection. If you are growing old, there is no time to lose, seek them while you may: "the night cometh when no man

may work." Be not ungrateful for all God's Grace, remember how He "led you into green pastures, where you were filled and your heart exalted, and yet you have forgotten Him."[1] "Therefore," He says, "I will be to them as a lion, . . . and I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart." Be not deaf to His warnings, turn without delay to the narrow strait road, lest, "because thou art lukewarm, He spue thee out of His mouth."[2]

[1] Hos. xiii. 6, 7. [2] Rev. iii. 16.

XXII.

Correspondence to Grace.

"*Who hath laid the measures thereof?*"—Job xxxviii. 5.

IT is a strange sight, and yet one that meets us daily, when those who are urged on towards perfection by Grace yet obstinately resist its impulses, sheltering their cowardice and lack of faith under all manner of pretexts, and striving to persuade themselves that they are doing all that need be required of them, thereby putting a limit to that which is illimitable. Conscience is not easy under their lulling process, while the impulses of grace urge it to more earnest efforts, and its voice must be stifled by false excuses. "I cannot lead a more retired life," the self-deceiver will say. "Overmuch solitude injures my health, and makes me gloomy and sad, whence arise many temptations. One must be sociable, and not make religion disagreeable by one's austerity; one must show that it is possible to be good, although one does keep up worldly intercourse. Why weary one's self with such perpetual recollection? It is enough to stupify one, and make perfection utterly dry and repulsive to others! Surely it is better to give one's self some freedom, and not strive after such tiresome *goodness.* Of course I wish to be recollected, but

without constraint or weariness." Or again, "We are told that those who would give themselves wholly to God, must deprive themselves of all the innocent enjoyments of life; but surely that is a prejudice peculiar to some very ascetic minds! I cannot accept so strict a view, so contrary to good sense as it seems to me. Of course real holiness forbids all excessive self-indulgence, nor do I wish for such, but what harm can there be in the enjoyment of all that is lawful, and commonly admitted by pious men? Without some such freedom, goodness would be simply intolerable! As to prayer, of course it is most necessary; but I do not see the need to devote so much time to it. Doubtless, we must pray, but in moderation, and I think indolence often makes prayer an excuse for neglecting work. I most entirely wish to lead a holy life, but what is the use of making so much fuss about it? Is it not better to keep in the background and be like other people as to conversation, dress, and the ordinary ways of the world? I cannot abide the affectation which sets up to be peculiar, and better than anybody else! And after all, surely one can save one's soul without all this strictness! There are many paths to Heaven, and if I do not take the straitest of all, nevertheless I hope to get there as well as those who do; everybody has their own way of doing things, and my way is not a repulsive austerity, which cannot be a necessary condition of salvation."

But while such persons labour to convince themselves that there is no need to take so high an aim, *God's Holy* Spirit ceases not to warn them of their

ror ; do what they will, they cannot shake off an ner consciousness that they ought to do more, and ıt let indolence hold them back. He mercifully icks their conscience while they reject their soul's :alth. "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good, e enemy shall pursue him."[1]

Perhaps such an one as I have described will ply that he has by no means given up aiming at :rfection, but how is that consistent with the habit ' life which inevitably falls short thereof! For .stance, submission to spiritual guidance is neces- ıry for those who aim at perfection. "Put your eck under the yoke, and let your soul receive ıstruction,—wisdom is hard at hand to find."[2] elf-will and a leaning upon one's own strength and isdom always mislead. "Woe to him that is ione when he falleth," says King Solomon, "for e hath not another to help him up."[3]

Again, no one can attain perfection in the spiri- ıal life who does not follow the callings of Grace, hithersoever they lead him ; different men may e called diversely—it may be to self-renunciation, ɔlitude, bodily mortification, strict rule, or a spirit f prayer ; be it what it may, there is no safety in :opping short of that call. Perfection consists in bsolute correspondence to Grace, and without a ıll, unreserved co-operation therewith, it cannot be ttained. The soul must walk by the path God hooses for it, and if we refuse to do so, we shall ırely miss our aim ; Grace when unheeded will ease to plead with us, and such must fear lest ıey "become vain in their imaginations, and their

[1] *Hos. viii. 3.* [2] Ecclus. li. 26. [3] Eccles. iv. 10.

foolish heart be darkened."[1] There is such a thing as a mere phantom of perfection,—the result of self-will, not Grace. But when a man rests content without a full unlimited aim after perfection, he is apt to reject all firm strict direction as mere bondage. He has a Director, because it is the customary thing, but he will choose one who will not restrain him; he will listen to such advice as suits him, but reject what is irksome; what is unacceptable he sets aside, and where he obeys it is from no spirit of obedience, but because the Director tallies with his own mind. Of course to such a man direction is merely a cloak for self-will and independence. And the piety of this class of persons is apt to take the shape of external works which are seen and praised of men. Who can direct a man profitably who is resolved only to do what he pleases? And is not such an one putting a limit to Grace, and refusing to follow its biddings, save where his own inclinations lead him?

Easy, comfortable, self-indulgent, such a man dallies with Grace, blinding himself with the belief that God calls him to nothing higher; whereas there is no stimulus to holiness so great as the constant belief that God requires much more of us than we are as yet doing, nothing so leads us boldly on to the higher calls of Grace. Or it may be that a man has an inward conviction that he is indeed called to a stricter life, but he tries to stifle it, alleging that the higher standard of holiness is beyond his reach—he is incapable of such attainments. "They all with one consent began to

[1] Rom. i. 21.

iake excuse."[1] Surely this man sins against light nd knowledge, and wilfully rejects God's Grace. iuch a person is very far from sacrificing his liberty o God—he does not even know what is meant hereby—he will not give up one particle of self-will, hough Grace is for ever urging him to come forth rom his grovelling life, to throw aside his self-pleasing habits, and die to his earthly natural inclinations. But the Voice of Grace, whether it teach him through a Director's lips or within his conscience, will not be heeded save in so far as it suits himself. His liberty must not be invaded; he wishes to do right, and is willing to practise the ordinary duties of piety, but these duties must be chosen by himself, performed when he pleases, changed or omitted as he likes. His own will is his standard, and whatever promise of submission he may have made to God, is retracted when it becomes inconvenient. If such persons do anything indicating a higher, stricter aim than their wont, it will be because they happen to fancy it. But, alas! how sadly these men fall short of that standard of perfection to which God calls them! Well may they tremble, for in truth they are grievously perilling their salvation.

God cares for those who care for Him, He watches tenderly over them, and deals with His creature according to his strength. He is liberal and magnificent towards a generous soul. "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand."[2] He sets no limit to His bounty when the soul gives itself unreservedly to Him. One

[1] *Luke xiv. 18.* [2] Isa. xxxii. 8.

may almost say reverently that He lets us fix the standard, and He will correspond to it. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." But then there is a reverse side to this. If we are churlish and sparing in our dealings with God, He will curb His wonted generosity, and grant His favours sparingly to those who give Him but a narrow grudging heart. If we limit our service, He will limit His Grace. To those who strive rather to do as little as possible, instead of the utmost which may be achieved, He will give—it may indeed be sufficient grace to save their souls, but without the fulness and blessing of His free gifts. And who can dare to say that his own vileness and corruption will not overpower such slender supplies of Grace to the exceeding peril of his soul? It is an awful thing to resist God's designs for us; He willed the soul to attain greater holiness; He would have supplied all such grace as was needful thereto; and His poor foolish creature has chosen a low material life instead! Surely this is to fight against God, and become His enemy? How can such resistance fail to displease Him—when a man deliberately wills the contrary to God, refuses to hearken to His Voice and obey His call? In like manner it grieves the Holy Spirit. His special office is within the soul, which He sanctifies by the secret inspirations of grace; and when the soul refuses to be sanctified as He wills, it resists and grieves Him. Nor is that all. After a time the soul grows accustomed to resist His holy urgency; it stifles the efforts of His Grace, and forces Him to cease His loving pursuit, until at last it no longer

periences those impulses and inspirations which ould have led it on to the heights of holiness. ien follows the withdrawal of Grace which has en so wantonly despised; the soul has rejected d repulsed Him, and now the Holy Spirit in His rn rejects that soul and departs from it, as from ul. "The Spirit of the Lord departed from him," d that because he "had rejected the word of the rd."[1] Can we doubt but that God's Holy Spirit more grieved at the rejection of souls whom He is called to special holiness than when those left lower paths heed Him not? These last do not iow the sweetness of His Voice, but they who ive heard it, who know His winning ways, grieve im, and are in peril of that fearful sin of which hrist Himself has said that "it shall not be for-ven, neither in this world, neither in the world to me."[2]

Such a deliberate rejection does, in truth, indicate evil will—a perverted spirit, such as theirs was whom S. Stephen addressed the rebuke, "Ye iff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, do always resist the Holy Ghost." Such resist-ice hardens the heart, until amendment seems ell-nigh hopeless; and one special evil of this sposition is, that it produces a tendency to censure ose who are different, and whose life is a tacit ndemnation to the sinner. Such vain attempts self-justification do but aggravate the mischief, ithout stifling self-reproach.

How great dishonour such men bring upon the iritual life! A profession of holiness, fine words,

[1] *1 Sam. xvi. 14; xv. 23.* [2] Matt. xii. 32.

a grand theory—and then—complete failure in action. S. Paul says to some of this character, "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned." It is too probable that the end will be a grievous fall. "They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush, therefore shall they fall among them that fall, in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord."[1] Such a disposition weakens the character, and prepares a man to fall on the first occasion, while it also strengthens and intensifies the passions, which lead him away and betray him into sin. Or such falls may come through God's righteous vengeance, or in loving chastisement which will reclaim the wanderer to his rightful path. You have advanced a certain way on your heaven-ward path—how grievous would it be were you to lose your crown through some paltry reserve? Or if, having overcome real enemies, you yield to mere phantom foes; or if, having given of your great things to God, you are niggardly in trifles! What are you that He should have deigned to call you specially to Him? Nothing save answering to that call is your safety; all else is self-chosen and the lower standard of your own will. No efforts of your own can raise you to His standard, however earnest and devout they be—you must simply follow His leading. Think what it will be when the hour of death comes, and you are not yet half-way along the path he bid you tread, while you must give account for every warning, every loving call. Meditate on these things, and on the words of the Prophet: "*If thou* shalt honour the Lord, not doing thy own

[1] Jer. viii. 12.

/s, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking
ıe own words, thou shalt delight thyself in the
:d, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high
ces of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage
Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath
)ken it."[1]

[1] Isa. lviii. 13, 14.

XXIII.

God a Jealous Master.

"I will search Jerusalem with candles."—ZEPH. i. 12.

THE first aspect of this truth is alarming, and might deter men from dedicating themselves to God. Where is the gain, a man may ask, of being united with Him in a close and holy bond if it do but involve me in a stricter judgment? Am I not worse off than before? and is it not better to rest satisfied in the more ordinary ways of life where one does not incur such fearful risks, rather than to expose one's self to so terrible a scrutiny as that of which the Prophet speaks?

Yet assuredly the blessing of that higher condition is not neutralised by the strict account those will have to render who are admitted to it. Even in things of this world men are willing to bear the responsibilities which attend on high position or great professions; although they involve a heavier fall and deeper shame if misused, and while he who is specially dedicated to God must expect a stricter judgment than those to whom less signal grace has been given, it is in truth but a token of the privileges to which he is admitted, and of the crown *which awaits* him if his service be faithful. The *remembrance* of this searching judgment will keep

a man from falling into a false peace, as though having once entered upon the religious life he had done all. Judgment awaits every one, but S. Peter tells us that it "must begin at the House of God;" and the Prophet says that He will search out the faults of Jerusalem "with candles." To every Religious then I would say, if you have hitherto deceived yourself with false security, cast it aside and seek to excite in your heart a holy fear, remembering the weight of your obligations, and the searching judgment awaiting you, and whether your life is such as your profession requires. Have you duly weighed the mercy and grace with which God drew you from the world to His own service? While you have been called into the narrow path, many whose lives have been no worse than yours are yet left in the perils of the broader way; they seem to have deserved as great grace as you, yet God's Love chose you; they would perhaps have made better use of your privileges, but in His unfathomable Wisdom God selected you as the object of His Mercies. How then should He not require a stricter account from you than from those less highly favoured? It is a great grace that you have been drawn from a world wherein you might have lost your soul; and although the mere fact of your Vocation will not secure salvation unless you live up to it, there are certainly persons whose natural character would incur the greatest danger in the world, while a total separation from it and its snares is a blessed safety to them. Examine yourself whether your individual character is one to which *the world's* entanglements would have

been specially dangerous, and if so remember that you will have to give a strict account as to the use you have made of the haven into which God has led you. It was through no merit of your own that you were thus called forth from the world; you deserved no such great grace, and if you hide the talent committed to you in a napkin, without making the return required of you by your Lord, how great is your danger. Nature itself teaches us this lesson. We expect the very soil to render a harvest for the seed committed to it; and men rarely give one to another without looking for some return, whether it be money, service, gratitude, or affection; how much more has God a right to require much of you to whom He has given freely. It is but right that His gifts should be returned to Himself the Giver, and when He rewards His servants He does but crown His own gifts.

Again, those consecrated to God have greater facilities for serving Him than other men, and consequently there is less excuse for them if they fail. There is no danger so great as exposure to the occasions of sin, which sometimes overpower the most resolute. A present temptation is sometimes stronger than all our resolutions of resistance, and some dispositions are specially yielding to such occasions, and to human respect. To such persons the difficulty of stedfastness in the world is very great. Even those who are deeply trained in saintliness find it hard not to do as others do when the time of trial comes, and the actual collision with temptation may sometimes shake the resolution of very holy men. We too often see those who

believed themselves to be well armed yield to the enemy. The greatest saints have affirmed this truth; even S. Bernard, stern and self-mortified as he was during the course of years of holiness, said that he knew he should still readily fall into sin when the occasion offered had not God's Mercy withdrawn him from such occasion. This advantage you have received through your Vocation, that you are cut off from so many occasions of sin.

Moreover, you are surrounded by the means best calculated to advance holiness. Example is one great help, and that you have, being surrounded by those who, like yourself, aim at the highest spiritual life. Solitude is another great means towards perfection; constant prayer and meditation another. Furthermore, the practice of holiness is your one pursuit in life. Those who are living in the world are inevitably occupied with numberless distracting cares, and too often they daily add to the weight of their own chains, and become the very slaves of their passions. Perhaps they give themselves but little time to reflect upon Eternity, or to remember that there is any weightier concern than the affairs of this life; torn to pieces by endless worldly interests, they lose sight of the one true interest. But you, in leaving the world, left all such distractions, and have but one pursuit, your sanctification. It is your only duty and calling; and if every Christian is bound to seek his salvation with fear and trembling, how much more you to whom such privileges and helps are given? How much stricter the account you must render?

Once more, by your Religious profession you became in a new and special sense God's property, and have no right to claim anything in you as your own. As your Sovereign, your Lord, and your Bridegroom, He will exact a more faithful allegiance from you than from those living in the world. Earthly sovereigns require tribute from their subjects, and if you do not give all you have to God, you defraud Him of His rights. If you cling with vain fancies to earthly idols, whether friendship, ease, or natural inclinations, you deprive your Lord of your heart, to which He Alone has a claim. And as the soul's Bridegroom how searchingly jealous is He, how sensitive to one faithless glance. The slightest deviation of the heart's love receives no milder name than that of adultery, because "we are members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bone,"[1] and He cannot tolerate that His Spouse should find any pleasure save in Himself, or should desire any save Him. This Jealous Lover will search out the depths of your conscience, penetrate its minutest folds, dissect every hidden fault, and bring to light the most imperceptible flaws. Do not deceive yourself with the belief that He will take the indulgent view you take of your own soul, persuading yourself that trifling deficiencies are atoned for by other merits or by zeal; and that a natural easy external life is compatible with the interior spiritual life to which your Profession binds you; that you can safely serve God after your own fashion, and need not necessarily act in opposition to all worldly *maxims*. *All* this is mere self-delusion. He Who

[1] Eph. v. 30.

is a Jealous God will not suffer any intermixture of self-indulgence, or the least attempt to blend the interior life with outward ease and luxury. It is mere self-destruction to combine the world's ways with those incumbent on your holy Profession; a base aggression upon His rights over your soul. He would rather see you pure from all spot of sin through earnest faithful efforts, than very fruitful in good works, which are the result of His Grace and mercy and not of your own merit.

If, further, a Religious has received extraordinary grace, as well as all these privileges which necessarily follow his Vocation, and still neglects to correspond thereto, great indeed is his peril! Such a soul has been given no common opportunities of perfect intimacy and union with God; of "casting aside the things which are behind, and of reaching forth unto those things which are before," and woe indeed to such an one who fails to correspond with God's merciful dealings with him. Search out your conscience then. See how you would endure God's searching Eye were you at this moment called to judgment. How have you corresponded to His Grace? How often have you defrauded Him, and profaned His temple, your heart? Have you not grieved your Pure and Holy Lord Jesus with vain earthly thoughts and longings? The servant who did not multiply his talent was condemned; what reckoning have you to give for yours? Examine what you love, what you fear, what saddens or gladdens you. Perhaps you may find a worldly heart beneath your religious habit. The Habit and the Cloister will not save you—nought will do that save

a holy life, a living faith, and a devoted will. Adam fell in Paradise. God said to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."[1]

[1] Amos iii. 2.

XXIV.

The Meekness of Jesus.

"*Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.*"—MATT. xi. 29.

IT is Jesus Himself Who bids us come and meditate upon His blessed Example of meekness, putting aside, as it were, all His other attributes, and setting forth this as pre-eminently the subject of our study and imitation. Let us obey the gracious summons; and to this end, let us consider the meekness of Jesus in the Manger, in His intercourse with men, in His Sufferings, and in His triumph over those Sufferings. Under all these aspects He set forth meekness as our lesson, by calling Himself a Lamb. "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land."[1] It was as a Lamb that He came among men: "Behold the Lamb of God."[2] In His Passion, He was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter;"[3] and when triumphant in Heaven, He revealed Himself to His beloved Apostle as "a Lamb standing on Mount Sion,"[4] surrounded by the hundred forty and four thousand virgin souls, whose privilege it is to be "firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

Wonder may well mingle with our reverence, as we consider how meekness and gentleness are

[1] *Isa. xvi. 1.* [2] *John i. 36.* [3] Isa. liii. 7. [4] Rev. xiv. 1.

among the first tokens of our Incarnate God; and that because such lowly graces rarely call forth men's admiration. Earthly abjection, even in God made Man, is commonly "despised and rejected of men;" and when Jesus clothed Himself at His Birth with this lowly meekness, He also accepted contempt and rejection as His portion. What save Infinite lowliness and gentleness would vouchsafe to be born in a manger, surrounded by cattle; a lowlier condition than that ordinarily endured by the humblest of men? Yet does not this lowliness bring Him day by day among us in a yet humbler dwelling-place through Holy Communion? His loving gentleness does not refuse to come as often as we invite Him into our breasts, which, alas! are often fouler far than the stable at Bethlehem. Yet He comes willingly to us, although He might well be wroth at the presumption with which we invite Him into our imperfectly cleansed hearts, which abuse His gentleness, and profane Him by their impurities, and too often will to remain too hard to cast forth their pride and worldliness. Men shrink from a gentleness which costs them so great a price; they will not humble themselves as little children, counting such lowliness as meet only for simple, weak souls. And thus at the present day, and among ourselves, the Child Jesus is often far more lonely and forsaken than He was in the Manger at Bethlehem, where Mary and Joseph watched in reverent love beside Him; the lowliness which He chose as His portion is despised of men. *O blessed Saviour*, Gentle Child Jesus, can it be *that so few* who seek Thee, so few even of those

who profess to worship Thy Holy Childhood, imitate it? We shrink from following the example of Thy Gentleness, because of the humility which is a necessary consequence. We affect services in honour of Thy Divine Childhood, we delight in pictures of Thine Infancy, we talk and write of it, we promote devotion to it, but when it becomes a question of imitating Thy loving Abjection, how few of Thy servants but will shrink from practical contact with that which they were so ready to exalt in theory? Grant me grace, O Dear Jesus, the Infinite God, to kneel in spirit before Thy Manger, and dedicate myself there with Thee, never to leave Thee, but gladly to drink of Thy Cup of humiliation; willing to be esteemed weak, foolish, contemptible, so that I may but be meek and gentle like Thee.

But if you would say this from your heart, you must lay aside all pride, earthly wisdom, and self-interest. A little child has no spirit of resistance, and Jesus humbles Himself even below the spirit of a child in the Blessed Sacrament. Are you ready to accept your lot, whether from God or from man, in such a lowly unresisting spirit? Are you ever a willing meek victim in the troubles appointed for you? Do you not love independence, even so much as sometimes to strive to be independent of God as well as of men; as much unwilling to bear coercion from His Hand as from a fellow-creature?

Next let us consider the wondrous meekness with which Jesus conquered the hearts of men—we find it alike in His manner, His looks, His words, His

replies, His rebukes, even in His zeal. Surely such prevailing gentleness might well subdue the most rebellious hearts and fill them with heavenly meekness. Jesus was a King—yet even as King, His characteristic was meekness: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, MEEK and sitting upon an ass."[1] Harshness and bitterness were unknown to Him: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street; a bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."[2] S. Paul speaks of His "kindness and love towards men."[3] Yet how sorely must this meekness and kindness have been taxed during His intercourse with His disciples before they received the Holy Ghost! They were ordinary uneducated men, who must daily have jarred upon His sensitiveness, while He dwelt among them, sharing their habits of life, and living in familiar intercourse with them. There is a touching tradition, that when the inhabitants of Nazareth were in any trouble, they were wont to say, "Let us seek the son of Joseph." Surely the thought of such a meek Saviour should fill us with gentleness and patience towards those among whom we live, and teach us to put aside all our intolerance and fastidiousness.

Again, we know that the Saviour's glance, in its loving gentleness, had a silent power to reach men's hearts, and fill them with tenderness, sorrow, and penitence. When S. Peter had denied his Master thrice, it was no thunderbolt which punished the faithless disciple; it was but one speaking look

[1] *Matt.* xvi. 5. [2] Isa. xlii. 2, 3. [3] Tit. iii. 4.

which the Lord turned upon His servant, "and Peter went out and wept bitterly." Blessed indeed is the heart which is so pierced and melted by His glance! too often we turn aside from it, and harden ourselves in our sin and neglect.

How full too of meekness and gentleness was every word that Gracious Saviour spake, bidding men "learn of Him, because He was meek and lowly;" drawing young children to Him, and teaching His disciples that "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven;" or describing Himself as the Good Shepherd carrying His poor lost sheep on His shoulder rejoicing; telling of the prodigal son's return, and how no wanderings can extinguish His love for His penitent children. What exquisite tenderness and pathos in every word! do they reach the depths of your conscience, or have you refused to hear them, or hearkened with unloving ears? Or, watch Jesus when the unbelieving world around insulted Him, how, instead of withering the offenders with "one rough word," He answered all indignities with patient gentleness. "I have not a devil, but I honour My Father, and ye do dishonour Me." "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou Me?" Even His friends "went out to lay hold on Him, saying, He is beside Himself;" but He continued His meek gentle course. Yet we cannot endure the touch of blame without vexation, impatience, self-justification!

His very rebukes are so marvellous in their gentleness, they must surely reach the hardest heart. Remember His gentle words to the woman

taken in adultery. "Hath no man condemned thee? neither do I condemn thee, go, and sin no more." Or Magdalene weeping at His Feet, the Pharisee host reminding Jesus that she is but a sinner, unworthy to touch Him, and His answer: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." When Judas betrayed Him, the only rebuke which fell from Jesus' Lips was, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" and when the poor erring Samaritan woman talked with Him, He had only tender patience and encouragement for her. Even so is He ever speaking within our hearts in loving rebuke and warning. Do we receive His words with pride and obstinacy, or in meek obedience?

Even the zeal of Jesus was full of meekness. When the Samaritans would not receive Him, James and John urged Him to call down fire from Heaven to consume the graceless men, but "He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Once, indeed, He took a scourge in His Hand and drove out those who profaned His Father's House; but it was in that same temple that He cried out, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink;" and while He rebuked the sons of Zebedee for their ill-judged ambition, one of them was that very disciple of whom we read a little later that he was "lying on Jesus' Breast." He rebuked the publican, but immediately one of them *invited Jesus* to his house, He went thither and did *not disdain to* sit at meat with "many publicans

and sinners." Is it not the same now? and whenever we feel His rebuke within our conscience, do we not also feel His tender love trying to win us back to our duty?

But as we ponder over the all-prevailing meekness of Jesus, are we not overwhelmed with shame at the thought of how little we imitate it? Do not shrink from contemplating your own weakness, but take the salutary though bitter lesson home. His Countenance, beaming with love and gentleness; and yours too often gloomy, hard, disdainful, ill-tempered towards those with whom you live, or at best uncertain as an April sky, in which clouds and storms are apt to banish the gracious sunshine. Where the heart is full of gentleness, the outward aspect is wont to partake of its peace and calmness. And your words? Alas, are they not sadly deficient in that meekness which wins hearts, disarms and pacifies angry spirits, and fills all around with rest and love? Is there no self-assertion in your talk, no persistence in your own opinions, no eager vehemence against what displeases you, no loud anger in your tones and expressions? Can you bear to be attacked without growing angry, and do not you often give harsh sharp answers? Can you return a gentle word to a stinging remark? Do you know how to give a rebuke without bitterness, irritation, secret revenge, false zeal, or gratification in a neighbour's discomfiture? No rebuke can profit another if it is lacking in gentleness and kindliness. And is your zeal for goodness and holiness free from severity and burning indignation? Is its *strength* tempered with gentleness? Examine

yourself in all these points by the Example of Jesus, and above all examine whether His Meekness has really won your heart, His tender glance pierced it; whether His gentle words have sunk down into it, His rebukes converted you, and His zeal possessed you.

If men find it hard to imitate Christ's lowly meekness in general dealings with men, they find it harder still to follow Him in His suffering meekness. In the Manger, some few, kings and shepherds, did homage to His lowliness, but in His Passion He was despised and forsaken, and all creation seemed to take advantage of His Infinite meekness to heap fresh sufferings upon Him. Meanwhile that Blessed Victim chose rather to suffer every conceivable anguish than to disturb His lowly meekness for one moment. But His servants have scarcely learnt how to bear even the trifling grievances or discomforts without murmuring, unable or unwilling to share the smallest portion of the Cross with meekness.

All through His Passion it was the same; He accepted the name of a Lamb; He fulfilled its characteristics unresisting, silent, enduring. The Jews had watched Him, they knew His lamb-like gentleness, and therefore they attacked Him boldly, they bound Him, led Him away captive, smote Him, and He offered no resistance. They tore the garments from off His Sacred Body, "but He, as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, opened not His mouth." He was scourged and crucified, but no *word of murmur* escaped. He chose to suffer all *things rather* than lay aside His patient meekness.

O Jesus, Victim for my sake, wilt Thou not indeed conquer my proud heart, and make it gentle as Thine own? Teach me to follow Thee afar off, and train me in Thy heavenly meekness! Such is often the cry of our heart in its better mood, but the impression too soon passes away, and leaves our life uninfluenced. Do you strive to bring such emotions to a practical result, and resolve not to defend yourself when accused, or resent anything done or said to you. If you are really meek with Jesus, you will infallibly be despised--men are ever ready to despise what they hold to be mean, and in the eyes of the world a lowly soul is mean. Can you bear this? Can you bear to be set aside as ignorant, ridiculous, unfit for society? Some worldly men will mock you to your face, and treat you as too obtuse to know that they are laughing at you. Have you courage to bear such ridicule? People will slander you freely, esteeming you too meek to notice it. But if you can endure all this patiently, you will grow in likeness to the Lamb of God, and He will be your joy and consolation, and amid contempt and injury He will fill your heart with such blessedness as no praise of men can ever give.

There is one more aspect under which we must consider the Meekness of Jesus—His triumphant Meekness in Heaven, to which all the rest cannot be compared. On earth it seemed that His all-gracious meekness was but for a time, and that in Heaven His Glory would shine forth. Yet even there He wills through all Eternity to bear the same title of Lamb; through all Eternity setting forth

His Triumphant Meekness, glorying therein. This we learn from the Holy Spirit in the Book of Revelation, where we read of the Lamb Triumphant in Heaven, and how amid all the glories of that triumph He is still THE LAMB. We read of His Throne, and how "the Lamb Which is in the midst of the throne shall feed" His chosen ones, "and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters;" of the four beasts, the seven spirits of God, and the four and twenty elders which surround that throne, and in the midst of all "a LAMB as it had been slain." As a conqueror He is crowned with light,—yea, He is Very Light itself, the Glory and the Light of the Heavenly Jerusalem. And the Throne of His triumph is on Mount Zion, where He is surrounded and worshipped by those blessed ones who have His Father's Name written in their foreheads, and who sing that song of triumph which none save those redeemed from the earth may learn. Nor is the Lamb's victory ended; even in Heaven itself He still overcomes all His enemies, "for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings," and His victorious servants "stand on the sea of glass having the harps of God, and they sing the Song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints;" while the voices of the four and twenty elders, and of many Angels and "every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," join in the universal harmony of praise, saying, "Blessing and *honour and glory* and power be unto Him that

sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever. . . ." "The Marriage of the Lamb is come. . . . Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Lord Jesus, I worship Thee triumphant in Thy glory, and bowing down before Thine Ineffable Meekness, I implore Thee that Thou wouldst deign to triumph in my weak heart. Triumph over my pride, my impatience, my irritability: raise Thy Throne within my soul, drive out all hardness with Thy Meekness. Fill me with Thy lamb-like gentleness in every word, deed, and thought. Reign over my heart and life as Thou reignest in Heaven. Teach me to suffer with Thee in this life, and grant me to triumph with Thee in the life to come.

XXV.

The Love of Jesus.

"*He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of* His *Eye.*"—Zech. ii. 8.

THERE is no point in the spiritual life more helpful for a Religious to dwell on than the care and love with which Jesus watches over the souls of those who are dedicated to Him, moulding them to His Will with all the tender wiles of grace, seeking to absorb their every faculty into Himself. Surely none who truly love Jesus can resist His glorious pleadings with their soul. In the first stages of the spiritual life His loving care leads the soul He has chosen as His Bride to seek the holiness befitting one so selected, and then He goes on to lead it to higher attainments, more thorough sanctification, with such gracious attraction, such winning tenderness as no mother ever poured out upon her first-born, no earthly bridegroom ever lavished on his bride. It is a sacred subject, and one which demands most reverent handling; and while I would ask God's blessing upon our consideration thereof, I would also observe that it does not apply indiscriminately to all souls, but only to those who are indeed consecrated as the Brides of Christ. Such close and intimate intercourse, as *that of which* we now speak, is their special privilege,

and it would mislead and discourage ordinary souls were they to expect to enter upon it.

Jesus leaves nothing undone which may adorn and sanctify the soul He loves; nothing is too deep, too high, too precious for His bride. He would be as a chain and a bond around you everywhere and at all times; that is, He would have you wholly captive to His Spirit—incapable of voluntary action. Some such happy souls there are so closely bound to Him that they cannot stir, save in and by Him; thrice blessed bondage, which is indeed what S. Paul means by being "the prisoner of Christ;" a bondage which binds the soul to Jesus, its Heavenly Bridegroom, for ever. Tarry not, but seek these precious fetters, implore Jesus to bind them closely round you, so that if in past times your lack of faith has burst them, it may never do so more.

But your Dear Lord would have something more than a mere passive bondage, such as a slave might bear; He would be the continual object of every glance, nor would He have you turn one from Him to the things of this world, however attractive or glittering. Your eyes must be ever fixed upon Him; your attention, your devotion solely His; you must be able to say, "Everywhere I see Jesus only; I contemplate Him Alone—that which is without is nought to me, I see all things through Him and in Him." Watch diligently, lest your wandering glances betray that you are not altogether faithful to His Will.

Nor would Jesus have you stop here, lest you should seek your own repose, rather than to please Him *in all things*. He would have His bride

ceaselessly occupied with the attempt to please Him, her only aim to attain His favour, ever seeking how to render herself more attractive to Him, while the secret whisper of her heart is for ever telling Him that her sole delight is to do His Will. Head and heart should be ever full of this aim—but is it so with you, or do unworthy cares distract you till Jesus is well-nigh forgotten?

Further, Jesus requires that the soul which is dedicated to Him be wholly detached from self, as from an abhorred thing. He would be the motive and source of all you do and say and feel, even of your love for Himself; He would inspire and animate all your actions and words, almost without your taking any part in them, until all that is of self and earthly being driven out, every pulsation of your heart be regulated by Him. Judge yourself whether He is thus the soul of all your actions.

Then, too, Jesus would so entirely absorb your whole being, that He Alone would fill your mind, so that you should "know nothing, save Jesus Christ." S. Paul gloried in this as his sole knowledge: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord." Whatever else may be spoken of before the bride of Christ, let it be ever so holy, she will scarce hear or heed it—it does not reach her heart; but speak to her of Jesus, and her whole mind will be alive and eager to dwell upon Him Whom she loves. This is her sole knowledge, because He is the only object of her thoughts; because every part of her *being is* stamped with the one impression—Jesus *Christ.* Search yourself, whether it is so with you,

or whether you know many earthly things, to the exclusion of this, the most precious of all knowledge. And when all this is done,—when Jesus has taken such entire possession of the soul, there is yet a higher point of sanctification to which He would have it attain. He goes on to teach the soul He loves to cease from desiring whatever is not Him; the loveliness of nature, the charms of mind and intellect, all attractions that are not of Christ will be as nought to such an one; mere dust and ashes, weariness and bitterness. Little by little He teaches His bride to lose all taste for the things of this life, save in so far as they are connected with Himself. Have you ever felt this distaste for all, save Jesus? Do you shrink back dissatisfied with all that is not your Heavenly Bridegroom? Yet He will lead you a step further—not merely to shrink from earthly pleasure, but actually to die thereto. He will have His bride as unconscious of the fascinations of this life as one who is dead; they pass over her without making the slightest impression, she scarcely notices that which delights those around; she would fear to break the spell of her enjoyment of Him by any lower claim. Examine yourself closely, whether you are not affecting high spiritual things, and yet clutching at earthly pleasures—or at least permitting yourself to enjoy such as come in your way, if you do not seek them.

The next step by which Jesus leads the chosen soul is to a total sacrifice of liberty. To this end He is ever urging her to give up all to Him, to retain no power of volition, no particle of independence. S. Paul said, "For the hope of Israel

I am bound with this chain ;" and so Jesus insists, urges, draws His bride on every side, until she has made a perfect renunciation of her liberty, and her soul's purity is no longer marred by the slightest attachment to self in any shape. Do you even approach this detachment? Or is not the secret spring of your actions to be found, not so much in the captivity of grace, as in your own inclinations and impulses?

There is another very searching means by which Jesus is wont to accomplish the sanctification of a soul He loves—more purifying, but likewise more hard and bitter than any gone before; the purification of anguish and desolation not merely accepted, but loved. When He finds a really strong and generous soul, He inspires it with this love of suffering, by which He "will throughly purge" it, before gathering it, as ripe corn, into His garner. Probably He has not as yet set this lesson before you—you are not sufficiently free from self; the least touch of pain and desolation depresses you, and you cry out in fear. But be sure that you will never be thoroughly sanctified, until you begin to love the seemingly hard dealings of God.

When the Heavenly Bridegroom has thus conquered and purified His bride, He begins to use her in His Service, and to that end He kindles her heart with zeal to make Him known and loved of all men. This becomes her chief thought, the continual subject of her prayer, her ceaseless aim, to bring all hearts to love Him; and she is so consumed by holy zeal that her own love seems as

nought, until she can bring other hearts to love Him too. Is this your one great longing? or have you not almost forgotten that you are pledged to extend His love and knowledge wherever you go? Such heavenly zeal will flow from the lips in burning words of love: "The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."[1] That flame bursts forth from the truly loving heart, kindling others in every word and deed. It will never rest, save when spreading His love. Such an one cannot speak of other things, for He Alone engrosses the soul, and it cannot cease to pour out His love upon all men. You are indeed the bride of Christ, do you love thus to speak of Him? Or, if not wholly silent, are you never constrained, as though the subject were unfamiliar? do you never weary of it? and, if so, can you hope that your heart is kindled with that heavenly flame?

The soul that is thus wholly Christ's comes forth from self; for time and Eternity it has given itself to Him—His Love and Glory is its only concern. Such an one is no longer restless or anxious even about her own eternal blessedness; all is safe in His Hands. She has renounced all, save His Love. He will dispose of everything as He will. Are you thus free from self-interest, or do you yet seek holy things from love of self? Jesus would have His bride worship and adore Him, even in the most trying and incomprehensible paths by which He may lead her, amid terrors as well as in caresses. Bow down before the awful mysteries of grace, which are not less precious to your soul as warnings than

[1] Cant. viii. 6.

the tender Mysteries of His Love. How earnest, how marvellous in goodness and power, are Christ's dealings with His chosen ones! Yet there are souls who refuse to be dealt with; who reject His Hand. God grant that you who read may not be among those hardened souls who resist their Bridegroom, and refuse to follow Him whither He calls them!

It is not all training and purifying. Jesus solicits His bride's love in numberless gracious ways. Who can dwell upon them and not bow down in adoration? Pause and consider His boundless Compassion: you know what your past life has been; may you not well marvel at that Compassion? "How great is the lovingkindness of the Lord our God, and His Compassion to such as turn to Him in holiness."[1] Your former sins deserved nought save condemnation, which could only be averted by incomprehensible mercy. Is not this in itself a sufficient reason for your heart to overflow with love and gratitude to Jesus, Who has not rested till He called Himself your Bridegroom? Can you fail to love Him with a love as boundless as His Mercy?

Or His present Mercy:—Since you were consecrated to Him you have often gone astray, wasted His gifts of grace, despised His goodness through your lack of faith and gratitude. Yet all the while His Mercy has been universal. "Therefore is God patient with them, and poureth forth His Mercy upon them."[2] He has not ceased to recall you, to restore His grace to your soul, as though you were all love and faithfulness. Does not conscience grant *this? and* have you not good reason to be filled with

[1] *Ecclus.* xvii. 29. [2] Ecclus. xviii. 11.

teful love, seeing that He has given you fresh ength from out of your very failures? Dwell too on His longsuffering, never weary, never repulsed spite of all your infirmities, which might well have austed His patience. All your contempt and ection of grace, your wanderings He has borne th, because you were His own, and He loved you. oes not your heart melt with love at this thought? ne world neglects and despises Him, and seeks e perishable gains of this life. It *is* but the world, id it cleaves to that which is its own.

But what shall we say when those who are con-crated to God neglect Him, banish Him from their eart, their thoughts, and their conversation? He raws you ceaselessly, tenderly to Himself. Can ou fail to co-operate with Him in hearty obedience nd love? Remember that He is very jealous; so oon as you become heedless, or rest in aught save him, He will sting your conscience. He reproaches, calls you, and if you resist He will punish you ith coldness and an averted Face, and all this ecause of His exceeding love, which cannot endure ou to give to creatures the smallest portion of that hich is His only. Watch for His warnings. These Thou didst admonish and try, as a Father."[1] His love points out the most trivial spot in the soul He cherishes, but with a parent's tenderness, oftening each rebuke with a caress, so that amid ts shame the soul feels ineffably drawn by His racious lovingkindness. So too He stills every lisquieting thought, be it anger, impatience, vexa-ion, bitterness. "His ways are ways of pleasant-

[1] Wisd. xi. 10.

ness, and all His paths are peace." His grace withholds you; He stills the rising waves; He pours oil upon the wound; He soothes and pacifies the troubled soul, and fills it with His own peace. He dwells within you, quelling whatever tends to disturb your soul, in order that you may be solely His, and He yours. Every day, every hour He teaches you to offer up all your earthly inclinations to Him; and it is your part to refer every thought to Him, so that co-operating with Him, at length grace may reign supreme in you. Hearken to His Voice within, "as one crying in the wilderness." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." He has said of your soul, "Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." There is no end to His grace and goodness; strive, toil, pray, that there may be no end to your faithfulness, your devotion, your single-hearted aim to be His and His only in all things, and then, at no very distant period, it will be given you to hear the welcome summons, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

XXVI.

The Interior Life of Jesus.

"*Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.*"—ROM. viii. 29.

AT the first glance it may seem presumptuous to venture within this hidden sanctuary, or seek to trace the likeness of our dearest Lord in His interior life. When God spake to Moses from the burning bush, He bade him "not draw nigh;"[1] when Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark of God because the oxen stumbled, the Lord's anger was kindled against him, so that he died;[2] Aaron was forbidden to "come at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat;"[3] and we are told that "there shall in no wise enter into Heaven anything that defileth."[4] How then dare we, defiled as we are with sin and earth, presume to enter within the Sanctuary, and gaze upon the hidden life of Jesus, which is holier and more venerable than all else that we can conceive. It was given to S. John, and to him only, to rest upon Jesus' Breast, and there to learn the mysteries of His Incarnation, but how shall such as we are hope to speak fitly of things so exceeding great and wonderful?

[1] Ex. iii. 5. [2] 1 Chron. xiii. 9. [3] Lev. xvi. 2. [4] Rev. xxi. 27.

Yet it is not presumption. When our Dear Lord deigns to come and give Himself to us in His Blessed Eucharist, He not only gives us a right to "dwell with Him," and gaze upon His hidden mysteries of love; but He further invites us so to do. Come then, ye that truly love the Lord, and let us worship Him in His hidden life, earnestly and prayerfully using this privilege so far beyond our deserts. Be Thou our aid, O Jesus! Teach us to gaze upon Thee, till we learn to imitate Thee, to dwell in Thy Heart as a dove in the cleft of the rock, whence nothing can draw us forth. Mayest Thou be the object of our heart's best worship and love, and may such contemplation ever feed and renew us.

We will consider the Interior life of Jesus from five points of view. (1.) The intention and end of all His actions. (2.) The constant secret engrossment of His heart. (3.) His absolute renunciation of all earthly satisfaction. (4.) His abhorrence of the world's principles. (5.) His hidden sufferings and bitter agony. And through all, we must never lose sight of the truth that our calling is to "dwell with Him," and to make Him our life-long study.

The first thing that fixes our attention when contemplating the hidden life of Jesus, is His perpetual aim to set forward His Father's Glory. It was His never-failing intention, the motive of every action; for this begun and ended all He did. S. John especially records our Saviour's constant allusions to this ruling object of His Life. "I seek not Mine own glory. . . . If I honour Myself, My honour is *nothing*. . . . I should be a liar like unto you, but

know Him, and keep His saying." "My meat is o do the will of Him that sent Me." "I can of Mine own self do nothing. . . . I receive not honour of men." He would that all glory be rendered solely to the Father, desiring nothing for Himself save to promote that glory. "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true." Wherefore? Because Jesus became Incarnate, and united our human nature to the Eternal Word solely for this end; because He gave Himself to endure His shame and agony to set forward God's glory, dying as the final crown thereof. He came on earth to bear every conceivable hardship and suffering for God's Glory. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." If then we believe that this was the intention of our Dearest Lord's whole earthly sojourn, does it not behove us to be like-minded, and following His example, to do all things great and small with a view to God's Glory, even were it to cause us suffering and death? "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God."[1] In no way, therefore, can we serve Him so acceptably, or so win His love, as by uniting whatever we do, for ourselves or for others, to His intention, and the greater Glory of God. "That we should be to the praise of His Glory."[2] It is thus that you will learn to do all things without the hindrance of self-love; regardless of self for time or eternity, forgetful of your own interests, even in holy things, putting yourself

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31. [2] Eph. i. 12.

aside, and devoting every aspiration and aim of body, soul and spirit, to the greater Glory of God. So doing you will grow into the likeness of Christ, and having no thought, no interest, save His, you will be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the Glory and praise of God."[1]

II. The Heart of Jesus was absorbed in His Father's worship and glory. He vouchsafes to us to enter within that Sacred Heart, and to gaze upon its wondrous mysteries, which none save the blessed saints in Paradise can duly appreciate. That Heart ceased not to worship the Father Who had begotten Him, as the First-Fruits of love and power; rendering a perpetual homage, prostrating Himself as Man before the greatness of God; humbling His Humanity before the sublime grandeur of the Godhead; in a perpetual oblation, "giving Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."[2] Moreover, His holy Soul ceased not to mourn over sinners; His Heart, with its boundless capacity for sorrow as for love, cried out, interceded with endless groanings for them: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save."[3] Is not such a sight one to absorb the contemplation of all Heaven itself! But do you delight to dwell upon it? Do you seek to enter within the sanctuary of the hidden life of Jesus? Do you strive to imitate its wonders, and to be moulded after its likeness? Or must you not rather sorrowfully confess that you

[1] *Phil. i. 11.* [2] Eph. v. 2. [3] Heb. v. 7.

scarce know what it is to dwell therein, and that the ordinary engrossing occupation of your heart is idle if not worse? Yet if you would learn to live the life of Jesus, it must be by continually seeking to enter in and to lose yourself within the hidden depths of His most Sacred Heart. That Dear Master waits for you, and you will not come; He graciously intreats you, and you heed Him not; He opens wide the door, and you turn aside after a whole tribe of vain unreal interests; blind, helplessly blind, to all that concerns your true welfare.

III. The third feature of this hidden life is its grievous bitterness and anguish. It was not only that He mourned over the sins of men; His Heart was ever steeped in passive suffering and agony, He continually received fresh wounds, new anguish, as He beheld the woeful sight of guilty man and an offended God. He saw as none other could how "the Lord hath accomplished His fury, He hath poured out His fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion;"[1] and the agony of such a vision was known to God only. This hidden suffering began while yet Jesus lay in the manger, it went on all through His life at Nazareth, and His ministry afterwards, only betrayed outwardly by some few words in His Passion. How awful was this intense and secret anguish cleaving ever to Him! Do you often meditate thereon, sharing His pangs, or at least mourning over them? If our Dear Suffering Lord had none save you to sympathise with Him, would He not often be left alone in His bitterness? And yet you are in part the cause of His heavy

[1] Lam. iv. 11.

grief. Turn to Him, hearken to His pleading Voice, fix your heart on Him until you learn the lesson His Hidden Life sets before you, namely, how to bear and sanctify your own secret troubles, which now so often overwhelm you with discouragement, paralysing all your efforts to do well. Let your poor shrinking heart, which is so quickly flooded by one drop of bitterness, cast itself into that Divine Heart, which bears, but is not overwhelmed by a whole sea of troubles ; cast aside all the trembling fears which cause you to fly before the slightest touch of pain, or else to murmur and struggle ineffectually, and learn of Him.

IV. The fourth feature of this hidden life of Jesus is His continual renunciation of whatever could yield Him any satisfaction, either external or interior. "Christ pleased not Himself." And this renunciation was deliberate ; He would accept no Divine consolations, because He was the Victim and Expiation of man's sin ; nor would He accept any from creatures, who were alike unworthy and incapable of yielding them to Him the God Man. And while thus refusing all alleviation to His own sufferings, He ceased not to set self-denial and self-sacrifice before His followers as the test of their service ; both inasmuch as this life's good things are worthless to such as truly seek the things of eternity, and also that those who love Him may share His renunciation of all earthly satisfaction. Have you learnt this lesson, you who are ready to grasp at all that is pleasant or soothing, who seek all that is acceptable to mind and body? Are you not *self-seeking* even in spiritual things, through your

shrinking from hardness, and your eager desire to minister to your own desires?

V. Lastly, let us consider our Saviour's abhorrence of all worldly principles. His Sacred Heart loathed them, and He was ever seeking to raise men from out of their darkness—"All these things are an abomination unto the Lord."[1] Nor does He cease to call us from the world's snares and maxims, which are not less opposed to His precepts now than they were then. Consider the value men set upon all that is great and dazzling, the things most prized and admired by the world; the way they will sacrifice anything for that empty bubble, reputation; the worldly wisdom and prudence which leads men to accomplish their own ends by cunning and craft; their pride and self-esteem, and contempt for others; their headlong pursuit of the pleasures of this life as the only true happiness; their love of personal comfort and indulgence. All these things are as an idol before which the world bows down and sacrifices; an idol to which many a man's whole life is devoted, at the cost of all that is sacred and holy; and it was precisely these very maxims which Jesus abhorred, as His whole teaching proves. What did He say of earthly riches and grandeur? "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." Or of the praise of men? "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you." Did He not condemn worldly cleverness and success when He said, "Be ye harmless as doves;" "Become as little children;" and when He thanked His Father for revealing the

[1] Deut. xviii. 12.

hidden mysteries of the faith unto babes? What could teach the lowly spirit of obedience better than His submission to Mary and Joseph, or His devotion to "His Father's business"? Personally, He knew no earthly delights. His portion was the desert, the wilderness, Gethsemane, and Calvary; "He had not where to lay His Head;" He cried out, "Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger." Knowing and believing all this, have you chosen His precepts or the world's? If these last, how can you hope that He will look favourably on you? Judge yourself: have you not often followed the opinions of His enemy the world—perhaps with conscious shame, knowing that thereby you were acting a traitor's part, yet lacking in courage to follow your Master's banner? Compare your standard with His, measure yourself by Him, and tremble.

But if we believe that Jesus calls us to imitate His hidden life, and if such imitation is impossible save by dint of entering within His Heart, dwelling with Him and ceaselessly contemplating Him, how earnestly should we strive to penetrate within the veil of that most blessed interior mystery. That He is willing to admit us, He has emphatically declared through His Apostle S. John, whose Gospel is full of Christ's loving invitations to men, so pleading, so earnest, it well-nigh seems as though He needed us for His Own Sake. He sets our helplessness before us; He urges our needs; He beguiles, He threatens, He promises to come to us *and make* His Abode with us, even as the Father *in-dwelleth* with Him. What can love do more;

how can there be a soul so hardened as to reject such love?

Our first duty as Christians is to answer His call—it should be our chief object—every one will grant this. But then, in order to do so, we are told by our Lord Himself that we must abide in Him. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." Consider this; the branch once severed from its parent vine has no life, no moisture, no power of fructifying; all its vigour, all its fruits depend upon its union with the vine; and even so you have not the slightest power to perform any good thing,—you cannot even raise a glance or a hope towards Heaven save through union with Jesus, save in as far as you "abide in Him." Helpless and poor in ourselves, in Him we are strong and fruitful: "I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me."[1]

Human nature has a perversity which ever prompts it to neglect the proffered mercy, and to despise the threatened ill, and therefore our all-pitying Lord seeks to warn us—"If a man abide not in Me he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Even so, if ye will not come to Me and be Mine, I will cast you forth, and from the fire of temptation you will pass to that of condemnation. Terrible as such a threat is, Jesus speaks it in mercy, in order to draw us under the shelter of His Hidden Life. See that you yield to His loving pressure—take refuge, and dwell ever

[1] Phil. iv. 23.

within the tabernacle of His Most Sacred Heart, lest you incur the wrath awaiting those who reject His love.

Yet again He draws us with the bands of love—"If ye abide in Me, ye shall bear much fruit." He knows that we desire to do right, although of ourselves we cannot bring such desires to good effect, therefore He supplies the means. "Abide in Me." Would you follow the path of holiness to which Grace has called you? "Abide in Jesus," and He has promised "ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." You will become strong in His strength—He will influence and inspire all you do; you will bring forth good fruit, "yet not you, but Christ Which dwelleth in you." "Know ye not," asks S. Paul, "how that Jesus Christ is in you?" and if it be so indeed, each word you speak will breathe His loving Grace, and your every action will be "likeminded" to His, because of that sacred, thrice blessed In-dwelling. Who would blindly refuse such precious gifts when the only return asked is to cast yourself unreservedly upon His Breast, and dwell for ever within the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

Nor does our Saviour's loving toil stop here; He makes a further appeal to our self-love,—I had well-nigh said to our natural pride. "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Ask freely whatever your heart may desire, and doubt not but ye shall have it, and that because ye dwell in Me. I know your every wish, and I delight to grant the longings of the soul which abides in Me. Who *could reject* such an invitation, whereby He seems

as it were to invest us with a share of His own omnipotence? Surely, if you are indeed seeking after holiness, you will gladly accept this dwelling-place, wherein you will find all means of sanctification, and where they will be unfailingly blessed to your soul's use. If you refuse such an abode, what do you but wilfully despise your own happiness, and what reality can there be in your heavenly aims?

A still more powerful, more attractive inducement is yet in store. It is no longer a question of avoiding evil and obtaining that which is good, He goes on to assure us that if we abide in Him, He will abide in us. Who is capable of conceiving all that is implied by the in-dwelling of Jesus in his heart? Consider well how your abiding in Him involves His abiding in you. He bids us abide in Him,—that is, bring our mind to dwell perpetually within His hidden life, contemplating its mysteries, and in return for this tender love He promises to dwell in us, and make His abode with us. If, then, you desire to receive this Gracious Guest, go to Him,—gaze, study, adore His hidden mysteries. It is yours to begin, but He will not be slow to second your desires; do you take the first step, and He will "fulfil all your mind." Do you knock, and He will open to you; do you seek, and He is ready to be found; to come to you, and never depart thence.

Finally, to kindle our hearts with intense longing for a closer insight into His hidden life, our Dear Lord vouchsafes to compare the in-dwelling He offers to us with all that is highest, greatest, noblest. Listen to His words, ponder them, and bow down in

wondering awe and adoration. "At th
shall know that I am in My Father, and
and I in you." Even as He dwelleth in F
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Sacred Heart.

XXVII.

Jesus Forsaken and Forgotten.

"*They have forsaken Me.*"—JER. ii. 13.

IS it not strange that after all our Dearest Lord has borne and suffered for us, we should treat Him with so much neglect and forgetfulness; a neglect so great that at times one might ask, Did He ever really come among men, and dwell on earth? or at all events are there any Christians left who know aught concerning Him? Call to mind all the wonders of love He wrought among men, and then think how little a place He fills in their thoughts and hearts now. Silence, ignorance, or forgetfulness of Jesus meet us on every side. Who strives to follow His precepts? Who loves to dwell upon His words; what hearts are absorbed by His Love? The world sets Him aside, and passes by with indifference what it treats as a mere historical reminiscence. O Blessed Jesus, is this the reward of all that Thou hast done for us! Does not such forgetfulness crucify Thee afresh! Thou didst lose Thy life in order to find it again in Thy faithful servants, and they forget Thee as a dead man out of mind! Thou art remembered forsooth, in pictures and statues, in books and sermons, but *oh, Desire of Nations*, how grievously art Thou for-

gotten in the hearts and lives of Thy people! Lord Jesus, we pray Thee so to kindle Thy Love in our hearts, that we may never forget Thee ourselves, and may lead others to love and serve Thee better. God grant that we may never ourselves be found among those who forget Thee.

There are three points of view under which Jesus is forsaken of men—they forsake His Precepts, His Example, and His inner communings with their hearts; in other words, they do not imitate Him, or speak or think of Him.

There are many different ways in which men forsake the precepts of Christ, and foremost perhaps are those who ignore them entirely. And yet these precepts cost Jesus His life. They were spoken as the oracles of God. He bore witness to them in humiliation and suffering, He sealed them with His Precious Blood, and gave them as a parting gift to His people, to be the law of Christendom. Nevertheless, how many so-called Christians ignore their claims? Speak to the world of the blessing of suffering or humiliation; of the true riches to be found in poverty; of overflowing peace amid the sorrows of this life; tell the world that the things wherein it glories are mere folly and delusion, its pleasures worthless and harmful; that all such eagerness for earthly treasures is vain, since naught has any real importance save the things which appertain to our salvation; speak thus, and you will not be heeded or understood. "What is that to me?" is the virtual answer. It would be less marvellous were such ignorance confined to those who are avowedly devoted to this world's cares and plea-

sures; but, alas! too often the precepts of Jesus are slighted and forgotten by those whose lives have been dedicated to Him. "Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider."[1] Those whose special calling it is to set forth His doctrines are silent, because they do not truly enter into such matters; and even Religious may be found who are as unfamiliar with the language of the Cross as the most worldly seculars. And if those who should be teachers have never learnt, if Christ's appointed servants are ignorant of their own office, how will it fare with those that have less opportunity of knowing the saving truth? Men are often ignorant through indolence; they have no energy to seek out the knowledge of Jesus, they look upon doctrinal exercises, spiritual books, and religious intercourse, as a waste of time. No doubt such people often "sin through ignorance,"[2] but this ignorance is a fresh proof that Jesus is forgotten. And it is possible, too, to study Him from a material side, historical and technical, which altogether loses sight of the living and spiritual side. Meanwhile it is far otherwise as to the world's maxims; men do not live in willing ignorance of these. They cultivate all such knowledge eagerly, and are ready to make great sacrifices in order to excel in human knowledge. Even spiritually-minded men sometimes pride themselves on their knowledge of the world, as though to be devoid of this were the stamp of all that is most despicable. To push onwards and struggle upwards, to attain human approbation, luxury and high position, to be

[1] *Isa. i. 3.* [2] Numb. xv.

at ease and enjoy life, such is the world's standard, and the world is apt to ridicule all that is lowly, poor, and self-denying, utterly mocking the Saviour's precepts, even as the Jews mocked the Saviour Himself. Foolish worldlings! Some day you, "repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within yourselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach—we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the Saints."[1]

Granted that some who know the truth of Christ's words do but mock them, and despise those who are more faithful; but it is also sadly true that even among those whose lives are dedicated to God, we find some who depreciate and hinder such as strive to live holier lives than they are willing to lead themselves, and whose earnestness is a continued reproach to them. The spirit of the world clings to these men, and they would rather be thought clever and worldly wise than merely humble followers of a meek and lowly Saviour.

Another class of men do not fall into these errors, but simply say that Christ's precepts are unattainable. In one sense this may be true in their case, but why? Is it not because they are living sinful lives, and following fleshly lusts, thereby stifling all the higher aspirations with which God favours them, and letting themselves be dragged ever downwards? Such men create the impossibility for themselves; they raise a barrier betwixt

[1] Wisd. v. 3-5.

ıeir souls and the higher life to which they cannot se by reason of their earthliness; but the blame :sts on their own lives, not on His precepts Whose yoke is easy, and His burden light." A :lf-indulgent and self-sparing spirit is another indrance to obeying the precepts of Jesus, which emand entire self-renunciation, and utter contempt ır earthly ease and comfort. Fastidious luxurious ispositions cannot endure this; obedience to such law would be a living death; and so, while pro-:ssing to serve their Lord, they practically despise nd reject Him, and all the while they would fain e esteemed as spiritually-minded. Others cannot nderstand His precepts, not indeed from innate ıck of perception, but because they have always ıeen so engrossed with the things of this world that heir minds are closed to higher things, and the ıindrance lies at their own door.

The result of all this is that on all sides we find he precepts of Jesus practically ignored, if not ıpenly assailed, and that in spite of all He has ıorne and suffered to win men to His obedience.

At first sight one might suppose that even if to ıbey Christ's precepts was sometimes hard to the lesh, at all events those who love Him would ıever forget Him in their daily conversation. But t is not so: He is as much set aside in ordinary :hristian society as His precepts are neglected in :aily life. Do we often find Jesus spoken of in eneral society, or even in the closer intercourse of riends? Are not worldly frivolous topics more enerally interesting? Are not His servants for he most *part silent*, as though they knew Him not,

inasmuch as we are wont to talk freely c
which occupies our thoughts? Is not that
Name almost strange to men's lips, as tho
were not all sweetness and grace, the price
salvation, adored in Paradise, a rich bless
those who utter it?

Does the world think of all this? Heathe
well be silent, for they know Him not; b
Christians, knowing all He is, love to sp
Him? Meanwhile, is the world ever weary
own vain utterances, idle views, ill-natured
inquisitive discussion? Who does not w
know all the tidings of the day, to be befo
with public interests? But the Name of J
banished from our social intercourse; it exci
interest, as the Prophet says, "It is the de
their own heart, which thinks to cause My
to forget My Name by their dreams, whic
tell every man to his neighbour, as their
have forgotten My Name for Baal."[1]

It may be answered that many who are
could speak of Him if they would. But the
do they refrain? Is it not that they are ash
Christians ashamed to speak of Jesus! as
dishonoured by proclaiming their allegian
Jesus, Who has done everything for us, to Wh
owe all we have and are! Grievous and sh
as it is, such too often is the case. We fear to
the world, and recklessly sacrifice Him to
respect; we doubt whether His Name will be
table to our so-called friends, and we th
court their favour by ignoring our Best Fr

[1] Jer. xxiii. 26, 27.

miserable policy which would gain worldly esteem at His expense. "Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel."[1] Or again we shun His Name in society, for fear of being laughed at, and called sanctimonious, over-religious,—devotees; shunning all such imputations as utterly obnoxious—to be avoided at all costs. Of course we wish to be considered religiously disposed, but we would avoid any fervour as a fault, and to talk of Jesus might incur the accusation of extra piety, or bigotry! We might be considered narrow-minded, weak,—if we make mention of our Abiding Strength! What says the Prophet Malachi—"They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name; and they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."[2] But remember also who it is that has said—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the Holy Angels."[3]

If, however, the Name of Jesus is not altogether banished from our conversation, is it not often mentioned without interest or life, and that because we do not talk easily of subjects into which we enter but little? We have plenty to say concerning the everyday interests of this life, but we soon exhaust our spiritual intercourse—we have so little

[1] *Isa. xliii. 22.* [2] Mal. iii. 16, 17. [3] Luke ix. 26.

taste for it, so little love, and men unconsciously revert in conversation to the subjects they love best and are most familiar with. This may be natural among men of the world, but is it always otherwise even in Religious Communities? Is His Name the bond of all intercourse even among those whose Habit and Profession put them beyond the reach of the worldly man's excuses for silence on this topic? Does not human respect and lack of real interest in the things of Christ penetrate even within Religious Houses? And is it not a tenfold greater evil there than in the outer world?

Above all, the Religious is bound to have Jesus ever present in his heart and conscience. Yet look into your own heart, and see what occupies and fills it through the day. Too often a crowd of wild, vague, ill-regulated thoughts, swaying you hither and thither, distracting you with ambition, hatred, or craving for pleasure; with petty interests, vanity, or an inordinate desire for the notice and praise of men. A ceaseless tide of childish, impetuous, mean or proud thoughts is ebbing and flowing within you,—"the thoughts of the heart are evil altogether;" scarce one look is turned to Jesus, He is left to stand knocking at the door of your heart, which is closed upon Him. Go on to investigate your mental prayer, that special season of intercourse between your soul and its Lord. Do not wandering thoughts and vain imaginations come in and too often exclude Him? Perhaps at last you become almost incapable of occupying *yourself with* Him, for though He comes again and *again in* persevering love, there is at last a time

when self-will and self-indulgence render His bride incapable of receiving Him. You may kneel down, you may listen to moving sermons, or read spiritual books, but you cannot fix your mind, or fill it with Him.

Do you dwell upon His mercies; or are you absorbed in present interests? Are you too unstable, too shallow-minded to feel real gratitude? If so, His Image will fade from out of your heart, and you will forget the Giver as well as the gifts. Or it may be that your memory is still stained and clogged with vain profitless recollections of past years, to the exclusion of better things.

Is your will always bent on that of Jesus, ever studying it, ever seeking to fulfil it, knowing no rest save in its accomplishment; or have you a cold, lifeless, inefficient will, betokening that He is forsaken and forgotten by you? Whence does this lack of will spring? Why is it that you are content to remain thus languid and passive, caring more for the easily won interests of this life, than for His joys? It is the want of faith and hope that keeps you thus supine and forgetful.

You by your Religious Profession are called to seek Him solely, and if you waste your powers on earthly attachments, you have little left for Jesus, and how sorely is His Tender Heart wrung when He sees you scattering abroad that which should be all His own, all stored in His Heavenly Garner. "Ye would not come to Me, that ye might have life." Fearful words to all Christian souls, but oh how tenfold awful to the bride of Christ,—called, yet lingering—chosen, yet faithless.



XXVIII.

Union with Jesus.

"*Abide in Me, and I in you.*"—S. John xv. 4.

WE need not marvel that so few peopl any great progress in holiness : th many, doubtless, who desire to advance, but most part they fail to take the right way. many think to find out new self-chosen pa else follow the mere fashion of the day, vic imagination and unreality ; while others pr seek a vague spirituality which has no r material assistance. All these go astray, b they reject the one sole true path.

Jesus Himself is that one only Way : "I Way, the Truth, and the Life."[1] "No man unto the Father, but by Me." How then wonder to find so little holiness on earth, w few take that way, by which alone it can be "Without Me ye can do nothing." It is t close, continual union with Him "in Whom building fitly framed together groweth unto a temple in the Lord."[2] All spiritual growth r through the means of good deeds, sufferir prayer ; and we can accomplish none of the *by union* with Jesus ; without that, good

[1] John xiv. 6. [2] Eph. ii. 21.

sufferings, and prayers are alike unprofitable. What are the holiest actions apart from Him? In the first place, they are deficient in grace. Certain ordinary graces are never lacking altogether to a Christian soul, but that higher grace which is essential to any real growth in holiness, and to the fulfilment of hard and difficult undertakings, can only be attained through "the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." Without this grace all our actions are naturally imperfect—"a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Then, again, the pernicious spirit of self, ever seeking to promote its own ends in all manner of specious ways, hinders our attempts to do right. "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."[1] And our natural passions debase and defile us, hindering and thwarting the workings of God's Holy Spirit within us. Nothing save union with our Dear Lord can overcome these evils; but oh the unspeakable blessings of that union to the Fountain of all Grace! He is the "well of living waters," of which all that are athirst are invited to drink freely "without money and without price;" and he who is united to it will find "a well of water" in him "springing up into everlasting life." This water never fails, but ever flows, cleansing and refreshing the souls which seek it. Jesus has said, "He who cometh to Me shall never hunger," and "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." "The glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams,"[2] to which every one who is athirst may

[1] *Phil. ii. 21.* [2] *Isa. xxxiii. 21.*

come boldly: for the Love of Jesus "drops as the rain, distils as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass,"[1] upon the soul which is united to Him. Those "streams from Lebanon"[2] receive their increase from God, and the souls which they refresh will bear much fruit, for they are "God's husbandry."[3] "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth, it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."[4] This "free gift of grace" sanctifies and gladdens those who receive it here in blissful anticipation of that which awaits them hereafter. "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life;"[5] and those actions which are performed under the influence of such union with Jesus shake off the natural corruption of earthliness.

Moreover, it destroys the spirit of self-love, substituting the Spirit of Christ within us. The life of our body does not depend more entirely on the soul than that of the soul depends upon its inward union with Jesus. There is no life in the body save through the soul. When that quits the body, death inevitably follows, and the soul has no life save through Jesus, Who is the principle of life. Apart from Him, "my beauty has gone for very

[1] *Deut. xxxii. 2.* [2] Cant. iv. 15. [3] 1 Cor. iii. 9.
[4] *Isa. lv. 10, 11.* [5] Rom. v. 17.

trouble;" and as the soul moves and operates upon the body, so Jesus, when united to the soul, will "make it perfect in every good work to do His Will."[1] Nor is there any other effectual means of restraining our headstrong passions, and purifying them. Even as clay is moulded by the potter, so does Jesus leave His stamp upon those who are united to Him, subduing and attuning their natural passions into perfect harmony. What is so powerful to soothe the heart and still its throbbings as communion with Him in the Blessed Eucharist, wherein the whole soul is filled with peace and joy through the very Prince of Peace? Watch the lives of those who are closely united to Jesus, and you will find that even externally they bear the signs of an indescribable calmness and peace, which none else can know. How much men lose for lack of this blessed union, how much sin is wrought, how much labour and toil for that which profiteth nothing! He who sows without Jesus can reap no harvest; yet also there are many who aim at holiness, and who have yet to learn that they labour in vain for lack of union with Him.

It is the same with respect to suffering. You may be ready to grant that holiness in action must depend upon union with Christ, and yet you may think that suffering is sufficiently sanctified if it be meekly accepted. True; but this willing acceptance is the very point on which all depends, and as a matter of fact men are wont to accept the crosses God lays on them most grudgingly, if not to rebel

[1] Heb. xiii. 21.

against them, and pervert their healing grace. We must learn how to suffer, if we would suffer profitably. Suffering is a vast means of sanctification, if rightly used, which meets us on every side. Infirmity and sickness, bodily irritation and weariness try us, but are they always well used, even by the good and spiritually minded? Do not even such people often become downcast and discouraged, impatient with themselves, hopeless of victory over self, apathetic and languid, till they cease to struggle against their failings? Or, when God visits the soul with internal deprivations and desolations, and other searching trials, how often, instead of bearing them as a healing discipline, we fret and rebel, murmur and cry out like spoilt children! Again, if our sufferings are caused by our fellow-men, how often we fail to look beyond the immediate cause to God, Who is their real Author, and in so doing turn such crosses to our own hurt, giving way to complaints, self-defence, or revenge, and calling our troubles hard and unjust. Or, if Satan lets loose his malicious temptations, we are frightened forthwith, and imagine there can be nothing but hindrances, whereas stedfast endurance and resistance would turn them to our soul's profit. But how different all these sufferings become if sanctified by union with Jesus! If, while sickness or pain, and the nervous irritability which so often attends them, tries you, your soul cleaves stedfastly to Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, Who had "no whole part in His Body," remembering that "He Himself *hath suffered* that He might be able to succour us; *for we have* not an high priest which cannot be

touched with the feeling of our infirmities," those pains will turn to rich blessings. When your heart and spirit are worn and harassed with internal struggles, which distract and hinder you, look once more to Jesus, suffering all possible mental agonies, sorrowful unto death, prostrate under His woes, bathed in bloody sweat, and ever ready to hear and share our sorrows, though we indeed "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Such uplifting of your heart will win you strength to bear all this, and still more the crosses which seem to come straight from God's Own Hand. Bethink you of the Mount of Olives, of Gethsemane; kneel at the foot of the Cross, and measure your spiritual desolation by that! Call to mind your Dear Lord's cry of anguish, and the sorrows which beset His whole Incarnate life, and your sorrows will be more easy to bear. Or, if you suffer through the deeds or words of your fellow-men, recall S. Paul's counsel, and "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." You will gain untold strength and forbearance from this source, and all your trials will grow comparatively light. Even Satan's temptations may be turned to your sanctification, if you cleave to Jesus under their assaults, remembering how He was Himself led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Suffering is inevitable; the question is, will you use it to your sanctification? It is a hard thing to suffer unprofitably, when you have the power of turning all your crosses into blessings through that union with our Dearest Lord which alone teaches us to lose ourselves in finding

Him, which turns every cross into a crown, because He triumphs in us through suffering.

It seems almost needless to say that there can be no profitable prayer without union with Jesus. It is such an evident truth that apart from Him our prayers must be worthless in every respect. There are three essential points in prayer; its matter, the way it is offered, and the person who offers it. Now as to its matter, it is but too true that often we "know not what we ask" of God. Sometimes we pray through natural fervour, sometimes because of some urgent need of the soul—more often out of mere habit. Perhaps you will say that whatever we ask must be for the soul's good? Possibly, but there are good things which it is not well for us to ask, and a wise petition must be one that is according to our need; whereas when we ask under the mere impulse of our own will, ununited to that of Jesus, we generally ask amiss. We are very ignorant as to the actual and real wants of our soul; our own lights are too feeble and uncertain to guide us, and even where there is more than usual knowledge, we lack that discerning spirit which is essential to profitable prayer. Then as to the way in which we pray. How often men ask impetuously, clamorously, without any reference to God's Glory and their own real good—dictating as it were to Him, coercing His Will, without detachment—as though natural warmth and eagerness sanctified their prayers, whereas that is but an unreal fervour. Most men seek to arouse their natural feelings, and *then* fancy that they are praying well; but such *prayer* is very faulty, either through wandering

imaginations, or an unbecoming familiarity of the soul with God. And as to the person who prays, he who would pray in his own strength is most weak of all, for what are we that we should presume to come before the All-seeing Eyes of God? Call to mind the imperfections of your past life, your grievous wanderings, your frequent and abiding sins; and dare you boldly come into the Presence of God? To go no further than the present moment,—are you even now fit to face Him? Grant that you are earnestly following after holiness,—yet what are you of yourself save impurity and corruption? Though "ye wash thyself with snow water, and make thy hands never so clean," yet "He will not hold thee innocent," and "thine own clothes shall abhor thee;"[1] and if unworthy to appear before His Presence, how much more unworthy are you to hope that He will accept your prayer? Rather must you cry out with him of old, "What is Thy servant that Thou shouldest look on such a dead dog as I am!"[2] But, on the other hand, when we offer our prayers as united to our Dear Lord, we are sure to ask precisely what we need; matter and manner will alike be fitting, their acceptance certain. "He that searcheth the heart knoweth the mind of the spirit." Who knows our needs as Jesus does? Who else can fathom every depth of our heart, and see every hidden spring of thought and feeling? Will He not guide us to ask that which we really need, instead of wandering amid a crowd of petitions, more indiscreet than holy? It is no longer we that ask, but God's Holy

[1] *Job ix. 28, 31.* [2] 2 Sam. ix. 8.

Spirit asking in us; the soul becomes an instrument of His Grace: "They shall all be taught of God."[1] We shall be sure to ask aright, because possessing Him we possess all things, and ask what we may, we shall ever rest in that blessed consciousness. Or if the soul should be over eager even to possess Him, and seek more than He wills to grant now, our petitions are moulded on "the measure of the gift of Christ," and are temperate even in the holiest aspirations, which are easily sullied if they spring more from natural eagerness than from the Holy Spirit's impulse. One special gain of union with our Lord is that it teaches us to pray with such detachment and simplicity that we only desire to possess even Himself as He would have it, knowing that He wills us to rest trustfully on Him, to seek and possess Him peacefully. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

The crowning privilege is that, when in union with Jesus, our prayers are always granted. Your past life may have been very sinful, your present life may be troubled with many imperfections, but united to Jesus you are certain to have all that you ask. It is no longer the sinner deserving nought save wrath and chastisement; it is Jesus Who asks, and to Him the Father refuses nothing: it is no longer you with all your weakness and guilt, united to Jesus the Father hears only His Voice groaning and intreating in you. The hands may be the hands of Esau, but it will be Jacob's voice that speaks,[2] to which the Father ever lends a willing,

[1] John vi. 45. [2] Gen. xxvii. 22.

gracious ear. Even were you to be silent as a conscious criminal before his judge, you would be accepted so long as you are united to Jesus, and clothed with His Righteousness: the Father sees only the garment of His Son, on which He cannot look without love.[1] Or if He looks on you yourself, be not afraid so long as you are in union with Jesus. However guilty you may be, He will behold you washed, dyed in the blood of His Dear Son; His Blood will cry out, like that of righteous Abel, nor will it ever cry in vain.

[1] Gen. xxxvii. 33.

XXIX.

The Life of Jesus in us.

"Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life."—JOHN v. 40.

WAS there ever a more loving reproach than these words,—a more urgent desire that we should all live in our Dear Lord, and He in us? All are called, for in truth His desire is our necessity; there can be no life in God save through Him. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"[1] and while in ourselves we are "dead indeed," we are "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," through Whom alone we can live. Now most Christians are ready to grant all this, but how few practically make it the rule of their life! What then is this life in Jesus? We know that the soul is the life of our body, on which it acts at will, directing every faculty and power; and Jesus must live in His true servant's heart in like manner, doing what He will with us, regulating every movement, inspiring every thought and word, controlling every action. Does He so live in you, penetrating your being, "the savour of life unto life" to you?[2] Meditate upon the end and object of His earthly sojourn, and upon the example of His saints, who having lived for Him in the Church

[1] Rom. v. 1. [2] 2 Cor. ii. 16.

militant, now live with Him in eternal rest and joy, and may yours be the same portion of life and blessedness.

Why did Jesus desire thus earnestly that we should come to Him and live? What was the object of His work on earth? All His labour was to establish His right over our hearts for His Father's glory and our salvation. He never wearied in seeking us, in order that we might have life. Consider the final acts of our Dear Lord's Incarnation, His Death and Resurrection; "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them, and rose again." Your life is the fruit, the reward, the trophy of His Death and Resurrection; you have no right to live to yourself; that life must be of Him, for Him Who died to bring you through the gates of death, Who rose again that you might live. He has said that the faithful believer "hath everlasting life, and is passed from death unto life."[1] But if, while receiving all your power from Him, you seek to lead a natural, self-seeking life, you are simply dishonest, inasmuch as you are not your own—you have been wholly bought by the cost of His Precious Death and Resurrection. Could there be a higher price? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus hath said it, and moreover He has promised—"Because I live, ye shall live also." If then we will not come to Him, and live in Him, we deprive Him of that which is His own, and do all that lies in us to frustrate His Will. Follow out

[1] John v. 24.

the thought and see how wholly He has purchased you. He gave up His Sacred Body to all possible anguish, that He might redeem your body; His Heart was steeped in bitterness that yours might be won; His Soul accepted all sadness and desolation that yours might be conquered. He gave a full equivalent in every shape, that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus might make you free from the law of sin and death."[1] He gave His Body to be the Life of our body, His Heart, His Soul, to the end that our "mortality might be swallowed up of life."[2]

Thus His Divine Life would absorb our miserable polluted existence, drawn down and chained as it is to earth by sensuality, worldly views, human fallacies, and evil desires; until by dint of "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, the Life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." Nor is the end of His death fully accomplished until we live in Him. Having so freely given Himself for us, He would possess us wholly; not with a mere external possession, as of slaves, but in our hearts and souls, which He yearns to fill with His overflowing grace. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Moreover, He has a right to us; to you and me; to every soul bought by His Precious Blood. He gave His life for you; you must give back what He gave. If an earthly creditor can claim "the uttermost farthing," how much more urgent is His *right to life* for Life? There is no other way of

[1] Rom. viii. 2. [2] 2 Cor. v. 4.

paying our debt; His Life must reign within us upon the ruin of our own, we must no longer live to ourselves: "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; for none of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself."[1] Thus, and thus only, life and death will alike be blessed to us.

All Christians are members of that Body whereof Christ is the Head; "we being many, are one body in Christ;" and He as Head has a right to direct our every movement, even as the soul directs and animates our natural body. Yet, alas, how little does this life abide in us! how ready we are to extinguish it through lack of faith! We shudder at the thought of material suicide, and meanwhile we are unmoved at the sight of multitudes destroying that blessed Divine life within themselves. "One shall say to Him, What are these wounds in Thy Hands? Then shall He answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends."[2] Too often, in truth, those who profess to love Him and receive Him do really inflict these cruel wounds, crucifying the Lord afresh.

What does His Sacred Heart desire so greatly as our life? Any one at all versed in the interior life must be conscious that the workings of His Holy Spirit within us perpetually aim at the destruction of our natural life, in order to fill us with His own In-dwelling life instead. The Holy Spirit is as a well of water springing up within us unto everlasting Life. Remember our Dear Lord's words, "As the Living Father hath sent Me, and

[1] *Rom. xiv. 7, 8.* [2] *Zech. xiii. 6.*

I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, eve
shall live by Me."[1] What greater oneness o
can there be than that of the Father and the
and it is even thus that Jesus would fain live i
To this end He gives Himself to us in the Bl
Eucharist, and not content with saying that
Our Bread, He reiterates in four several way
am the Bread of God," God living in His
Incarnate Word; "the True Bread," which
can feed and strengthen us; "the Living Br
lest any should imagine Him to mean a
earthly or material food; and finally, "the
of Life," which satisfies and fills us, so "that a
may eat thereof and not die."

Moreover, Jesus desires not only to live i
but to die in us. Death is the passage to life
when He lives in us we die to the flesh: "pl
with Him in the likeness of His death." It is
that our union with Him is perfected: "Now
be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall
live with Him." "Right dear in the sight
Lord is the death of His saints," because
Who has lived in them, dies in them also. L
He desires to live and reign in us, for God's
He also takes upon Him our crosses and
through which we can best promote that
He reaps the harvest of our earthly life
presents it to His Father in Heaven, "spi
sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Chr
We are unworthy to be offered, save in so
His life is confirmed in us; but through th
He *fits* us to continue the perpetual memor

[1] *John* vi. 57. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 5.

His sufferings, "a continual burnt-offering before the Lord."[1]

Look where we will, all things are full of Jesus; heaven and earth are full of Him Who hath set His "Glory above the heavens;" though alas, on earth, there are rebel souls which will not come to Him that they might have life. But in heaven He is the Glory and blessedness of all; their glory is to share His Divine life, His Glory is to spread His Kingdom over the boundless ranks of the redeemed. S. Paul tells us that Christ ascended up on high "to lead captivity captive, and give gifts unto men." His earthly work finished, He crowned it in Heaven "for the perfecting of the saints." He ascended up above all things that the whole Heavens might share His Glory; and as Heaven is filled with the souls of the blessed, and they, each and every one, are filled with Jesus, the Heavens are indeed "full of His Glory."

The saints praise and worship God through Jesus; "with angels and archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy Glorious Name." Theirs is the beatific vision: "the Lamb is the light of the heavenly Jerusalem;" and the brightness of that great city is "like to the glory of God, as a stone most precious, clear as crystal, pure as gold, transparent as glass." How could even the blessed saints and angels endure to gaze upon this dazzling brightness, this light of light, were it not that, inasmuch as "the Lamb is the light thereof," they see God through Him, and live? Look at a number of crystals in the sun's

[1] Ex. xxix. 42.

light, and you will see nought save the brightness of its glow which fills them all. Even so in Heaven, each blessed saint is filled with the light of life, Jesus, and He Alone is visible in all the multitude of His redeemed. Ah, if we hope one day to share this beatific vision, must we not strive to gaze more and more intently on Him here? so that here and hereafter, in this life and in the next, "THE LIFE" may be our light and life!

What then is the practical lesson we must learn from our Dear Lord's loving words? To be inseparable from Him, "living with Him by the power of God,"[1] one with Him. Body and soul make one man. The Sacred Humanity and the Divine Word were One—even so must we strive to be one with Him. To be one with Him our earthly nature must be infinitely purified—"no man may see God and live." Such purification is hard to bear; we must pass through keen fires to attain it. "Every man's work," S. Paul says, "shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is;"[2] and S. Peter tells us that our faith will "be tried as by fire."[3] We must be tried in the furnace of suffering before we can hope to be inseparably united to Jesus; the price is costly, but oh how infinitely precious is that life when gained! All that is not Jesus, all our own likings, tastes, lights, and ways must be sacrificed if we would attain that unity of life with Him, until He Alone lives and reigns in us: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." When on the Mount of Transfiguration the Apostles recovered from their

[1] *2 Cor. xiii. 4.* [2] 1 Cor. iii. 13-15. [3] 1 Pet. i. 7.

first dazzling wonder, Moses and Elias had disappeared, and they "saw Jesus only." Blessed indeed are they who see Jesus only at the cost of all that is most precious to them; blessed are you if you can willingly forego all light and brightness, all joys and consolations, in order to see and possess Jesus, and Him Only.

XXX.

The Interior Life as framed on that of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

"Look that thou make them after the pattern which was showed thee in the mount."—Ex. xxv. 40.

THERE is a great deal said about the interior life at the present day, but among many of those who seek after it we find a vague indefinite theory as to its attainment. Individual temperament and self-chosen ways, an attraction to the refinements of the spiritual life rather than the leadings of grace, have often a large share in framing systems which end less in the destruction of self than in the erection of an imposing structure wherein to shelter our own will and fancy. We miss the true spirit of the interior life because we do not take Jesus as our Example. Why wander here and there, restlessly pursuing visions of our own, when we have a perfect model ever before us on the Altar? "Look rather that thou follow the pattern which was showed thee in the mount." The Altar is that mount, and there we find our Perfect Pattern—our Dear Lord in the Blessed Eucharist. There, and there only, is a true Model of the interior life, for there we find the Fountain *and Source* of all holiness, as though He delighted

to give us the most perfect example of the highest kind of hidden life in His own Blessed Presence, veiled under the Sacramental species. There are four essential characteristics of a true interior life —solitude, spirituality, destruction of self, and union with God; and nowhere are these to be so perfectly found as with Jesus, hidden within the Blessed Sacrament.

His solitude in the sacred species is unbroken, and the truly interior man in like manner will never be drawn from a spirit of recollection, either by occupations or the influence of the senses. That solitude is his delight, he is ever seeking to plunge more deeply therein; it is to him as a chamber where he "communes with his own heart and is still," as Job, "when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle" (xxix. 18), or as the sparrow sitting alone on the house-top.[1]

Jesus is Alone with His Father under the Sacramental species—no other, not even the highest heavenly intelligence, is privileged to enter there; and even so the interior man dwells within his recollected heart where nought save God may enter; watching against all interruptions in order to enjoy the undistracted simple Presence of God. To this end he is ever casting forth all thoughts and imaginations which might raise a cloud betwixt his soul and God, renouncing even spiritual enjoyments if they threaten to occupy his heart. He seeks and would possess God without any earthly interference, believing that as He displayed His Power in that material void whence He called Creation forth, so

[1] Ps. cii. 7.

He wills to display His Power in the spiritual void of the heart in which He establishes His reign.

Again, in the Sacramental species, Jesus is wholly separated from all creatures, dwelling amid them as though they were not; and the interior man imitates this divine solitude by living in the world as not of it, shunning all social distractions, the empty interests and pleasures of the world, as unworthy of a heart filled with God, and seeking everlasting life. He is conscious of "a great gulf fixed between" himself and the world which can never be bridged over, remembering S. Ignatius' words, "Now do I begin to be the disciple of Christ since I desire nought that I behold." That world is to him as an Egypt, whence God has led him into the wilderness, there to attain the liberty of His chosen servants.

Not even during His earthly sojourn was Jesus so hidden as He now is in the Blessed Sacrament. In the Manger, the Temple, or on the Cross some heavenly ray of brightness continually set forth His Divinity. And in like manner the really interior man is unperceived by the world; none can enter within his heart and see the marvels of grace which God vouchsafes to work there,—those hidden dealings are a secret to all save himself: "their souls are in the Hand of God."[1] Even the object of such grace himself is scarcely conscious of it, "your life is hid with Christ in God."[2] S. Peter speaks of the "hidden man of the heart," and such an one is hidden not from the world only, but from himself *also; God* Alone penetrates and fathoms this soli-

[1] Wisd. iii. 1. [2] Col. iii. 3.

tude which He has "hedged in."[1] None else may know what He works within the souls He chooses thus to be His secret dwelling-place and tabernacle. Jesus is profoundly silent under the Sacramental species,—silence is essential to perfect solitude, neither word nor sound to break it; and the interior man carries about him this spirit of retirement, which he would fain not disturb, so that he may the better hear the Voice of Grace. He is not given to much talking beyond the claims of necessity and charity: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose."[2] His will and understanding are merged in God through reverence for his Lord and abhorrence of himself; his heart keeps silence because he rests peacefully in God, and amid this universal stillness no voice is heard save that of his whole being prostrating itself before its Creator. Thus, whatever stir there may be in the world of sense or imagination, the spiritual man will not quit his interior solitude, either because the turmoil fails to reach him or because it only drives him into yet deeper stillness.

The second characteristic of the interior life is that those who seek it must be altogether spiritual, detached from all that is material, or at least capable of spiritualising it. Mind, actions, feelings, all must be changed by the Spirit of Grace; and this analogy we may trace perfectly in our Lord under the Sacramental species. His Presence in the Holy Eucharist is a deeper mystery of faith than any of the other Sacraments, none of which try it

[1] *Job iii. 23.* [2] Isa. xxxv. 1.

to the same extent, and that because although in every Sacrament "the feeble senses fail," there is nothing absolutely contrary to them, whereas in the Holy Eucharist their evidence is wholly negatived, and the mind accepts and believes that which they are incapable of receiving.

"Præstet fides supplementum,
Sensuum defectui."

Therefore this is essentially THE Sacrament of Faith,—the "new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His Flesh."[1] Even so the interior man must live wholly by faith; it is only as he becomes "strong in faith"[2] that he will be able to "give glory to God" aright.

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus veils Himself, neither seeing nor speaking after the manner of men; and so the interior man must live, "using this world as not abusing it;"[3] setting aside those things "which all are to perish with the using,"[4] "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world." He will eat and drink, move and speak as duty and charity require, but through all such material actions he will feel that his soul is called to higher aims, and that remembrance will spiritualise material things to him.

The Body of Jesus dwells in the Sacramental species after a spiritual fashion, even as the soul dwells within our body; and an interior man may be said to be so transformed that the spiritual nature altogether predominates in him. To this

[1] Heb. x. 20.
[2] Rom. iv. 20.
[3] 1 Cor. vii. 31.
[4] Col. ii. 22.

end he is ever subduing the body by abstinence and mortification, as also training it in perfect obedience to the Spirit—"hating even the garment spotted by the flesh," as S. Jude says.

Again, Jesus is invulnerable in the Holy Eucharist, and whatever injury is offered to Him therein cannot reach Him, but the elements under which He is concealed only. So the interior man is invulnerable to all outer assaults; they may overwhelm him externally in body, property, or reputation, but they go no further; he is inaccessible, because such blows cannot go deep enough or rise high enough to touch his spiritual life. Day by day that spiritual life becomes more sheltered from this life's attacks, more one with God.

But these characteristics are not enough for the interior life; he who would truly learn it must go on to complete self-annihilation before he knows what it is to live for God Only. And where can he learn that so fully as from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? As in consecration Christ's Sacred Body and Blood become wholly present in every part of the Sacramental species, so when He takes possession of the soul, He annihilates all. else, sensible or spiritual, and when self is wholly destroyed, He fills the place with His own gifts. Even as He dwells under the outward semblance of Bread and Wine, so does He vouchsafe to dwell in the interior man, who is moved and inspired by his Saviour only, while outwardly he seems to live and move like other men. Jesus is pleased to be hidden, as it were lost before His Father's Majesty, in the *Sacramental species*, by the depths of His volun-

tary condescension, and the interior man rejoices to be as though he were not, before God "reputed as nothing,"[1] thankfully confessing that God is everything, and he nothing.

If the Sacramental elements accidentally become corrupt, Jesus ceases to be therein; and even so if the Christian be rendered impure by any contact with sin, Jesus forthwith retires. How pure should that heart be wherein His Blessed Presence deigns to dwell! Remember, too, that whereas it is through a miracle of Grace that He comes into the Sacrament of our Altars, and takes the forms of bread and wine, no miracle is required for the withdrawal of His Presence. So likewise, supernatural and well-nigh miraculous as is the work of annihilation by which the soul is made meet for the indwelling of Jesus, He is easily driven forth from it by sin or lack of faith, if the soul give not diligent heed to preserve His Gracious Presence. Your own experience tells you that it is no small labour to win Jesus, but that a very trifle will drive Him forth. The disciples at Emmaus had scarce opened their eyes to know Him ere "He vanished out of their sight." It is not only in building up that you will attain to the interior life, it must be also by casting down; "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."[2]

But the "perfect work" of the interior Christian

[1] Dan. iv. 35. [2] 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

lies in union with God, all else is but a means to that end, and this union is above all others set forth by our Lord in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. He contracts with the Sacramental species an indissoluble union, a union of captivity, a union of dependence, and a secret spiritual union—all of which the interior Christian must contract with God, giving up every semblance of freedom, and rejoicing in his blessed bonds.

When the Priest has spoken the words of Consecration, and our Lord has entered the Sacramental species, He is united to them in such a manner that no earthly power can break that union while they remain pure. And this is the first characteristic of the union with God of an interior man—nothing can break it save sin. All creatures are as nought to him; let his daily tasks be what they may, through them all he aspires to God, and is inseparable from Him. He can say with S. Paul, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?"

Thence follows the union of captivity. Our Dear Lord willingly takes upon Him the chains of the elements, and binds Himself as a prisoner upon our altars; and the interior man binds himself with a voluntary chain to God. He might make free use of such things as would be acceptable to his senses; he might do whatever seems good in his own eyes; he might indulge his natural thoughts and tastes—but this union takes away all such liberty. Whether he works, writes, speaks, or performs spiritual exercises, all are subject to the obedience of God's Providence. His thoughts are so filled by grace that they tend ceaselessly to find

their rest in God, and his whole being becomes the slave of that union of captivity into which it has been so lovingly brought.

The third union, that of dependence, is also to be traced in the Eucharist. Our Lord in a way depends on the Sacramental species, only continuing His Presence on the Altar while they exist, and they depend on Him and His ever-renewed miracl by which He is present in them. So the soul depends on God, in all things external and internal, "its going out and coming in." But the highest of all is that secret and spiritual union which is far beyond all sensible delight. It is so hidden, so mysterious a thing, that God Alone Who forms it can fathom it. It is beyond our work to describe, and suffice it to say, that such a privilege can only be the work of grace. But if you would attain to it as the climax of an interior life, seek solitude, a spiritual mind, self-annihilation, and union with God by deep recollection, in all studying the example of our Blessed Lord in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Interior solitude will separate you from creature love; a spiritual mind will separate you from self, and all that is material and carnal in it; self-annihilation will teach you to possess God amid the ruin of all besides; union with God will teach you to live solely through the power of His Divine life. But the reality of these blessed truths must come to you more through the Holy Spirit than through any effort of your own, nor will He withhold His gracious teaching, if you seek diligently to frame *your heart* and life upon the model given you by your *Dear Lord* in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

XXXI.

Perfect Obedience.

"*Obey them that have the rule over you.*"—HEB. xiii. 17.

EVERY one is ready to admit that obedience is a duty, but nevertheless it is most rare to find the spirit of obedience among those to whose spiritual advancement it is a necessity, namely, members of Religious Communities, and those who, while living in the world, have voluntarily placed themselves under direction. Some few considerations as to practical obedience may assist both these classes to examine and perfect their performance of their own theories.

First, then, such detachment as leads to a holy indifference must be sought after. By indifference I mean that you should make no distinction between the duties obedience may impose upon you, but accept all alike, without preference for occupations or exercises according as they may be more or less congenial to you. Obedience is equally ready to give itself to active works, or to remain in retirement; to practise great strictness, or submit to narrow limits in cases of austerity; to devote much time to prayer, or to be restricted to brief periods of devotions; to go forth among men, or to live the most hidden life; and that because what-

ever the seeming difference may be in all these things, there is none in God's Sight—great and small are all alike to Him. Once grasp this principle, and you will acquire true detachment; nothing enjoined by superiors will disturb you either through repugnance or excessive attachment. Weigh the obligations of obedience evenly and calmly; seek true liberty of heart. Consider that nothing should enthral a heart which has been consecrated to God, and that whatever duties obedience may lay upon you, if fulfilled stedfastly, neither clinging to what you like nor shrinking from what you dislike, you will be daily advancing in holiness.

Your sole preference should be the Will of God; the mere fact of a duty being laid on you by obedience gives it value and importance; and you owe more reverence and affection to that duty than to any which are self-chosen. If it ceases to be a matter of obedience, it must fall back into the rank of indifference.

Again, perfect obedience always waits patiently, whether as to a change of work, which is often very acceptable, or as to our future destination, or other arrangements. Even in such matters as we desire for the advancement of our spiritual growth, obedience requires patience—whether it relates to the increase of fervent religious exercises, or of personal guidance, or such like privileges. People often forget this, and fret as to where they will be sent, what work will be allotted to them, or for a *different* system of spiritual guidance. But true *obedience* waits gently and without weariness,

accepting what is in accordance with its own wishes, or the contrary, in the same trustful, patient spirit, having but the one aim—to please God; and believing that this can best be done by submission to the authority He has appointed. All will be welcome when you see God's Hand in whatever your superiors do; position, employment, privations, all coming from God, your director being merely the visible agent through whom He is leading you.

But you must aim at something more than mere passive submission. Perfect obedience is ready for self-sacrifice unquestioning and without reserve, save where sin is concerned, a reserve always presupposed in all questions of obedience. Such self-abnegation implies great courage and earnestness; you may be set aside as deficient in talent and capacity, treated as incapable and useless, or given the lowest and most disagreeable offices as what alone you are fit for; you may be sent hither and thither, removed from your position when you expect it least, raised and lowered you know not why; you may imagine yourself to be personally despised, you may meet with repulses and rebuffs, you may lack sympathy in your outward labours or your inward trials; you may be unable to gain the attention of those set over you, or they may listen coldly; you may be rebuked when you thought you were doing your very best. All this is trying work, but perfect obedience requires you to bear it patiently. I do not mean that you must necessarily have to undergo such vexations, but that you must *be ready and willing* to bear them all in the spirit

of true self-sacrifice of your will to God's. Seen from that point of view, no humiliation or contradiction will seem hard, but rather a means of advancing in that annihilation of self which alone can attain to perfect holiness. True obedience will not stop short in this self-sacrifice until it has imitated Isaac, and truly given itself up with him to death.

Again, perfect obedience sees all authority by the light of faith, and this principle involves all others, because he who sees God's authority in that of his superiors will have no difficulty in self-surrender, patience, and endurance, knowing that he submits himself, not to man, but to God. Never look at those who are set over you from an earthly point of view, but look beyond that which is visible to God Himself, and so you will avoid many errors. A low view of obedience, as rendered to man, not God, leads to false judgments of those set over us, to self-sufficiency and arrogance. We easily fall into the snare of weighing the capacity and motives of superiors, and accuse them, perhaps most unfairly, of prejudice, narrow-mindedness, or impulse. But if you can see God Alone in the authority to which you are subject, you will cease to dwell upon the individual weakness, incapacity, or prejudice of your superiors, and your submission to God's delegate will be rendered lovingly and directly to Him.

Have you been in the habit of murmuring against obedience, of complaining and grumbling to some *special confidant*, or to any one who was disposed *to listen?* If so, be sure it is because you have

failed to see God in your earthly superior. Accept this truth, and your murmurs will cease, and you will have no word or thought save of reverence for him who is set over you in the Lord. The faithful heart will check all complaints which infringe obedience, as it will root out that proud earthly spirit which sees no more than a fellow-creature in a superior, and therefore either refuses to obey, yields an unwilling obedience, or obeys by halves. Perfect obedience sees no authority save that of God, and bows willingly before it, learning thereby to mortify all high-mindedness, and growing in meekness and detachment. On the same principle, if you are tempted to any excessive attachment to a superior, so that what you do is in danger of being done for his sake, you will easily mortify such natural affections, and learn to see God Alone in the authority which attracts as well as in that which repulses you. You will look beyond the mere instrument to the Hand of God Himself. There is one more point to be attained in perfect obedience —renunciation of the understanding and will, which is the surest way to attain real peace, because having overcome all your own self-pleadings, you will not be torn asunder by the struggles which must often exist between your private opinions and your duties. God demands this of you; for what is all besides without the renunciation of a puffed-up understanding and self-will—the root of every conceivable spiritual mischief? Self-will leads a man to cling obstinately to his own fancies; he is impatient, restless, anxious. He is self-sparing, given *to shirk or* cast aside his burdens; he will be

froward and insolent, or flattering and mean, as his impulse prompts—the critic and censor of all that crosses his path. Without renunciation of this self-will, woe betide the community to which such a person belongs, and still more, woe betide his own soul!

XXXII.

Mortification of the Mental Powers.

"*He became obedient unto death.*"—PHIL. ii. 8.

THERE is the greater need to enter somewhat more closely into this subject, because while uch mortification is essential to spiritual perfection, : is shunned by most of those who aspire thereto. They are ready to admire a perfection which they would fain acquire, but not at so great a price. But hose who would offer a full and perfect sacrifice to God must have no self-chosen reserves, whereby to rustrate their own efforts. Nevertheless, this form of mortification is not applicable indiscriminately to ll Christians. All men are not alike capable of eeking the highest spiritual perfection; and mere nen of the world cannot even know what is meant y mortification of the mental powers. Their minds re earthly, "sensual, having not the Spirit,"[1] vainly puffed by their fleshly mind."[2]

Again, such as are naturally proud and over-earing, "who rejoice in their boastings,"[3] are ncapable of this intellectual submission, either be-ause they cannot humble themselves so far as to wn they can be wrong and others right, or because heir tendency is to argue and justify their own views.

[1] *Jude 19.* [2] Col. ii. 18. [3] James iv. 16.

Very learned men find it hard to accept such mortification of the understanding. Their habit of mind is to think highly of their own science, and to consider submission to spiritual guidance a token of weakness and ignorance. So, too, people of the world, accustomed to deference and consideration, rarely contradicted, admired and sought after, how should they be able to submit like little children! But perhaps the worst of all hindrances is fashionable religion,—when people discuss and decide every subject, however little they may be capable of doing so; criticise the spiritual life in all its details, freely give their opinion and advice, imagine that they thoroughly understand all religious matters, and take their own views as the true standard of all theory and practice. Talk to such people indeed of submitting their judgment and opinion to obedience! You may as well preach to the winds!

And, in truth, there are great difficulties besetting this submission, even to those who are desirous of practising it. Many people who will not shrink from the hardest, most disagreeable things, so long as only their external actions are concerned, find it very hard to submit their judgment: they will even be eager in austerities, unsparing of self, but their austerities must be such as approve themselves to their own mind. They are zealous people, devoted to good works, who yet cannot endure the slightest interference with their self-will, and if their Director interferes with that, or thwarts their own opinions, they shrink back, or throw off the yoke. Even among Religious, there are many who indulge a belief that while sacrificing their will and their liberty

they may at least retain full control over their intellect, not perceiving that perfect obedience involves that as much as the rest, although, in truth, it is the hardest of all to surrender. But those who desire to advance in the highest paths of perfection, whether living in, though not of the world, or in community, must not rest satisfied until they have submitted all, self-opinion as well as self-will, under the yoke of obedience.

For want of this obedience a man is liable to yield to the temptation of neglecting trifling duties laid upon him as unimportant, whereas an exact observance of Rule often depends more on little than on great things, and such wilfulness is essentially damaging to the love of a spiritual life. Self-conceit is the usual source of the error, and a habit of measuring everything, superiors and their commands, by a self-chosen standard. He who yields to this spirit, criticises freely, thinks nothing of accusing those set over him of imprudence, severity, laxity, unfair preferences; he will make injudicious remarks and confidences, stir up strife under specious excuses, and finally it is by no means improbable that he will resist God Himself. If these persons could but perceive that such self-opinionated pertinacity springs from a subtle pride, let them disguise it as they may, they would perhaps be more willing to combat it. But, as a rule, one can hardly judge of the reality of a man's spiritual life until it has been put to this test—the submission of judgment and intellect. Simple obedience does not criticise or dissect, and the virtue of many a good work is marred by the way in which it has to be tried and

approved by a man's own judgment before he enters upon it. It is a delusion to suppose that God requires of us unwonted austerities, and unusual or singular practices, and that therefore the interior call of grace is free to overpower obedience; and this delusion often hinders God's real work and Glory. Obedience becomes unreal, direction an empty form, and "the pride of a man's own heart causeth him to fall."

In temporal matters, whether they concern the welfare of our bodies or our affairs, we are ready to abide by the opinion of our chosen advisers, rather than our own, which is so liable to be mistaken. And if this applies to secular things, how much more to things spiritual, in which error is still more likely! No one who has any insight into the spiritual life can deny this, if he will deal honestly with himself. Every step of that life is beset with dangers and difficulties, and wise and true guidance is more necessary therein than in the comparatively unimportant affairs of this life—no man is competent to be his own guide. Consider the question from the highest point of view (surely no one who voluntarily puts himself under obedience would take a lower standard), and you will see how much is involved in mortification of the mental powers—deep humility, gentleness, patience, silence, self-abnegation, the destruction of personal sensitiveness, all of which are invaluable means for advancing in the way of holiness. Mortification of the will must be included in this submission, whereas it is possible *to sacrifice* the will, and yet retain a rebellious and *self-asserting* intellect.

Moreover, by this sacrifice we offer the truest homage in our power to God, and that because the mind made in His Image and Likeness is the noblest part of man; and when offering up our intellectual faculties to Him, we give Him the worthiest tribute we possess—His own image. This thought alone might render the submission more acceptable; but, further, it tends greatly to promote interior peace, banishing carefulness, discussion, argument, and contradiction. We might apply King Solomon's words concerning Wisdom to obedience: "After I am come into mine house, I will repose myself with her, for her conversation hath no bitterness, and to live with her hath no sorrow, but mirth and joy."[1]

We are told that "right dear to the Lord is the death of His saints;" and "the offering of the righteous maketh the altar fat, and the sweet savour thereof is before the Most High."[2] Surely we may apply these words to the death of intellectual pride, wherein all that is most precious to man is offered through obedience. It is dear to the Lord as a costly sacrifice, and no souls are more acceptable to Him than such as are dead to all besides in order that He may live and reign in them—the true Life in death.

The man who follows this course is not likely to go far astray. Our Lord bade His disciples become as little children, not as to innocence only, but in simplicity of obedience. S. Philip Neri never allowed those who were under obedience to argue or discuss what was enjoined. Our Lord Himself

[1] *Wisd. viii. 16.* [2] Ecclus. xxxv. 6.

declared that He did nothing of Himself, all was of the Father; He came into the world to be obedient, even unto death, teaching us thereby to find our rest and sanctification in obedience. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."[1]

[1] Heb. v. 8.

XXXIII.

Jesus the Example of Obedience.

"Leaving us an Example, that ye should follow His steps."—
1 PET. ii. 21.

WE have considered perfect obedience from all its several points of view; we have seen how it involves a holy indifference to all things, patience under all circumstances, endurance of all extremities; how it sees God in superiors, how it readily embraces self-abnegation in every shape. But one thing remains, that we consider how in every one of these characteristics Jesus is our Example. He accepted indifferently whatsoever His Father's Will laid upon Him—as willing to be born in a stable as in a palace; to ascend Mount Calvary or Mount Tabor, accepting alike the glory of the one and the ignominy of the other. He was ready to dwell in Egypt or Nazareth—for two years, or twenty; to accept His hidden life of thirty years, and His public life of three years only. Whatever it might be, He saw nothing save His Eternal Father's Will, and whatever that might be He was ready to accomplish it.

So He waited in patient obedience to that Will, doing nothing of Himself, without desires or *inclinations*, waiting "until His hour was come;"

giving Himself up freely to every trial, however humiliating; cradled in a manger, covered with insults, poor, suffering, dying a shameful death. Who among us but would feel ashamed of his own self-indulgence after meditating upon this? Again, Jesus never looked at the trials which were heaped upon Him as caused by human agency; He treated all creatures as God's instruments which were permitted to afflict Him; His frequent reference to the prophets of old, and what they foretold concerning Him, shows this. Lastly, He resigned His will and judgment as man wholly to His Father's Will, although He too was God, He too was Holy and Just as the Father. Let us briefly review the setting forth of this Divine Obedience, as we find it recorded by the chosen disciple S. John, and in our Blessed Saviour's own words.

If we consider wherein lies the subject-matter of our Dear Lord's Obedience, we shall find that it is comprised under ten points: *i.e.* His mission, the end He set before Him, His words, His actions, His sufferings, His faithfulness, the marked epochs of His earthly sojourn, His self-abnegation, the necessity He was under of doing His Father's Will, and His joy in fulfilling it.

Jesus Himself tells us that in all these points He was obedient to His Heavenly Father, in which He, so to say, exhausts the whole subject, teaching us thereby how unreserved and hearty our obedience must be if we would follow in the footsteps of our Lord.

First then as to His mission;—Jesus came into *the world* because the Father "sent Him."[1] Over

[1] John vii. 29.

and over again He repeats this fact, as if to stamp it on our minds, and to teach that zeal must be regulated by obedience. Yet how many people persist in following out their own devices in good works, without waiting to be called into action by obedience, as though nothing could be right but what suits their own ideas, or those could never be mistaken.

Nor did Jesus only come from Heaven in obedience to His Father's Will; while on earth His only end was to "work the Will of Him that sent Me." It is possible to undertake a duty out of obedience, and yet to persist in carrying it out according to one's own will and pleasure; but Jesus entirely put aside His own will, proclaiming, "I came not to do My own will, but the Will of Him that sent Me."[1] Self-seeking, conceit of our own works, complaints or murmurs, spoil all the virtue of obedience; it can only be perfected by a pure intention. Again Jesus said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."[2] Through all His public ministry He continually set forth this truth, ever reminding His disciples that His words and teaching were of the Father, and meant to serve His Glory Alone. Are our words thus restrained and disciplined? are they under any check from a sense of what is due to authority, or do we not too often give way to a tone which is altogether contrary to the spirit of obedience?

Whatsoever Jesus did was in obedience to His Father; "the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do;"[3] His every action

[1] *John vi. 38.* [2] John vii. 16. [3] John v. 19.

was in accordance with His Mission, that which was "shown Him of the Father," by the Father's authority, in unity with Him. His whole ministry upon earth was one prolonged act of obedience. Yet we too often avoid submission to authority if we can, we dislike receiving orders, we throw off the yoke of obedience at the first opportunity, and like to do everything after our own fashion, and in our own way!

It was the same in His Sufferings: "not what I will, but what Thou wilt."[1] "If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." He would not even choose His own Cross, but meekly accepted whatever the Father laid on Him. Is this how we, for the most part, submit to our crosses and sufferings; do we not even in these try to shape things according to our own will?

Moreover, every event of the earthly sojourn of our Dear Lord was accepted by Him precisely at the moment appointed of God. "I go not up to this feast, for Mine hour is not yet come." Though He wept over Jerusalem, and exclaimed in His yearnings, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished," yet He would not hasten anything, or allow Himself to be taken of the Jews, until His "hour was come." How unlike our eager impetuosity, one while rushing at what we would achieve, while at another, perhaps, we lag and look back from the duties to which we are called.

Jesus renounced His own honour and glory for *that of God*: "I receive not honour from men."

[1] Mark xiv. 36.

He came to do His Father's Will, not seeking His own glory, but that of "the Father Which sent Him." But we in the pride and vainglory of our hearts, do we not often think more of our own credit and self-satisfaction in our works, than of simple, unquestioning obedience? One might have thought this enough, but there was a yet higher point of obedience which our Great Example set before us. He declared Himself unable to do aught save through the Father—"The Son can do nothing of Himself." "I can of Mine own self do nothing;" a detachment and humility beyond our power to fathom—that He, All-powerful inasmuch as He was God, should be unable to do aught of Himself, inasmuch as He vouchsafed to become Man. Who can contemplate this Divine humility, and then dare indulge in dreams and visions of pride, our own strength, or powers for good?

Finally, Jesus declared that His sole delight and sustenance was in obedience to His Father. "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." In truth "His meat" was nought, save renunciation, toil, suffering, and death, —a marvellous lesson of free, hearty, ungrudging obedience rendered out of a single and loving heart.

Such is our perfect Example of Obedience. Let us take His Divine lessons to heart, and intreat Him with ceaseless fervent prayer to grant us grace, so to follow in His Most Blessed steps, that we too may be "obedient unto death."

XXXIV.

The Interior Humiliations of Jesus.

"*He made Himself of no reputation.*"—PHIL. ii. 7.

AMONG the various ways in which man may bow in adoring homage before his Creator, there is none more complete and effectual than a voluntary abasement and humiliation of every faculty; external, comprising all suffering, contumely and abjection; interior, whereby the soul is prostrated before the Majesty of God. Every Christian knows and believes that Jesus took upon Himself the utmost possible external suffering and humiliation; but few attempt to dwell in loving reverence upon His interior humiliations, the deep abasement which as Man He vouchsafed to endure before His Father's Majesty. Let us meditate upon this wondrous mystery,—the Grandeur of God, His Power, His Sovereignty, His Immensity —and our Dear Lord's voluntary humiliation before that Power and Majesty.

How utterly weak and scanty all our mental faculties prove, when we would bring them to bear upon so infinite a subject as the Being of God! What creature but must fall prostrate before that *Incomprehensible* Greatness, crying out with the *Angel of the* Apocalypse, "Who is worthy to open

the book, and to loose the seals thereof!"[1] "The whole world before Thee is as a little grain of the balance, yea, as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth."[2] So spake the wisest of men, to whom God had made known the marvels of His Greatness; and Job, who was taught by God in His own school of affliction, exclaims, "Canst thou by searching find out God?"[3] while the Prophet Isaiah declares, "All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity."[4] And that because HE IS. "I AM THAT I AM;"[5] without beginning, without end; "Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come."[6] In truth God Alone has any independent Being; all creation is but a handful of clay moulded by His Hands. It was before this Infinite Being of God that Jesus humbled Himself in His Sacred Humanity: inasmuch as He took upon Him the form of man, He partook of the weakness and nothingness of created beings, holy and pure as He was in His Incarnation; as man His life had a beginning, and like other men, there was a time when He was not. Even the incomparable beauty of His soul was "a treasure in an earthen vessel;"[7] and His Glory was that of the Lord, not of the flesh.[8] As God He was everything; as man absolutely nothing, "the outcast of the people." If Jesus vouchsafed so to abase Himself as man, how should not we rather prostrate our sinful flesh lower than the very dust before God,

[1] Rev. v. 2. [2] Wisd. xi. 22. [3] Job xi. 7.
[4] Isa. xl. 17. [5] Ex. iii. 14. [6] Rev. iv. 8.
[7] 2 Cor. iv. 7. [8] John i. 14.

crying out with Job, "O remember that my life is wind!"[1] and with David, "What is man that Thou art mindful of Him!"[2]

The Power of God,—who on earth can form even a faint idea of what that is? "I am God."[3] "Before the day was, I am He, and there is none that can deliver out of My Hand; I will work, and who shall let it?"[4] "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man. . . . Yea, He shall prevail against His enemies."[5] The great ones of the earth have a certain destructive power, but He Alone is all-powerful, His Strength only knows no limit. "I create and I destroy." "I am the Lord, and there is none else."[6] "With the breath of My mouth will I slay the wicked." He setteth up the meek, He scattereth the proud, and casteth out the counsels of princes, He, and He Alone ruleth the world with the rod of His Power.

Now turn and consider what His abasement was, when Jesus, One with God, Very God, became Incarnate, and though as God All-powerful, took upon Himself all the helplessness and weakness of human nature, as man powerless to do aught, "I can of Mine own self do nothing." He accepted our infirmities, and "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."[7] He humbled Himself before God's greatness and omnipotence; "My Father worketh in Me." By reason of the Hypostatic union, His Flesh was pure and without sin, but on its earthly side He was exposed to all our infirmities and temptations, "like as we are." As

[1] *Job vii. 7.* [2] Ps. viii. 4. [3] Gen. xlvi. 3. [4] Isa. xliii. 13. [5] *Isa. xlii. 13.* [6] Isa. xiv. 5. [7] Heb. iv. 15.

ı too, He renounced all independent action; e Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He :h the Father do." "As My Father hath taught :, I speak these things." In that He was God, : could do all things; in that He was Man, He ıs powerless to act save through the Father. We ıow this, and yet, poor weak wretches that we are, e would fain think and act for ourselves, even resuming to criticise God's doings in and for us! We would fain follow our own imaginations, instead of utterly renouncing our own weak judgment. We contend with God's Holy Spirit, and refuse to imitate our Blessed Lord's example of meek abasement before His Father's Majesty. O let us seek rather to bow down in lowly silence, contemning all that is of self; poor in spirit, let us meekly acknowledge from the depths of our heart, "Without Thee I can do nothing." Then indeed may we hope to receive of His Fulness, Who filleth the hungry with good things, but Who sendeth such as are rich in their own conceits empty away."

God is our Sovereign Lord; thrice happy those interior souls who love to bow before Him, knowing that there is none like Him in the mightiness of His Sovereignty. Earthly kings are often subject to one another, according as one may be stronger than his neighbour, but "I am the Lord, and there is none else."[1] He is King of kings, and Lord of lords; Angels, powers, and principalities are subject unto Him. All earthly monarchs' power is brief, and soon must pass away, but His endureth for ever. Now Jesus as Man offered Himself in perfect

[1] Isa. xlv. 6.

dependence to His Father; His Being, His Sacred Soul, and its union with the Word, all depended upon God—therein He humbled Himself unceasingly all through His Incarnate life. The grace which clothed His Soul, so far beyond all angelic or saintly grace, He received from His Father, and when the time came for ending His ministry that He might "go to the Father," it was because the Father willed it. How much more do we depend upon Him for all things. "Where sin hath abounded grace doth much more abound;"[1] and specially so in each individual soul that has been led into the paths of holiness. Without that abounding grace what would you be? where would you be? Have you not fallen grievously if it did but seem to be withdrawn a brief moment? and if you are now going forward in the ways of holiness, is it not in sole dependence upon the leadings of grace? Are you not then bound to cast yourself utterly before the Goodness and Majesty of your Sovereign Lord, Whose grace alone sustains you, intreating Him never to leave you for one instant? "By the grace of God I am that I am, yet not I. . . . ." There is an inevitable dependence upon God, which you must accept in awe, whether you will or no, but there is a further voluntary dependence, which it is yours to give Him out of a free spirit. This dependence involves a deliberate casting aside all the trammels and precepts of the world, and as deliberate a subjection of your whole being to the captivity of Christ.

The Immensity of God is in such startling contrast to the littleness of His creatures, that it seems

[1] Rom. v. 20.

impossible for the latter worthily to prostrate itself before the former. If the whole creation is but a speck before Him, what can any single human being affect to be in His Sight? We cannot even grasp the thought, but Jesus fathomed its every depth, and freely offered it up before the Greatness of the Father.

Pause a moment in reverent thought before that Immensity; look to the Heaven above, and to the deep below, and say with David, "If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there: if I go down to hell, Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy Hand lead me, and Thy Right Hand shall hold me. If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day, yea, the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day, the darkness and light to Thee are both alike."[1] Everything in creation is filled with God—small and great; animate and inanimate; the criminal who flies before Him, the saint who seeks His Face. God is a Spirit; His Spirit overflows and creates, even as the soul quickens what without it is a lifeless body. He enfolds all things, but He is enfolded by nothing. Every created thing, whatever it may contain, is in its turn contained; God Alone contains all things, and is contained of nothing, for He is Infinite. He is near and afar off, in the height and in the depth, within and without us. As an atom whirling in space, a grain of dust measured with the planetary system, a speck of

[1] Ps. cxxxix.

light compared to the sun's rays, so is all creation, and less, before His Immensity. What can the heart conceive so marvellous, as that Jesus, to Whom, as God, this Immensity belonged, should vouchsafe to leave it all, and become man? What does all our self-assertion, all our pride, appear like when viewed in the presence of such wonderful self-humiliation. Too pitiful in our weakness, even to abase ourselves as we ought before His Immensity, we can but fall down before Him, crying out with the Apostle, "My Lord and my God!" Let us confess ourselves to be unworthy to come before Him even in our utmost self-abasement; and therefore let us offer Jesus, the Incarnate God-Man, Who gave Himself for us, as our oblation. What can make us lower than we already are save sin? In body we are weaker than the very beasts of the field; in spirit powerless to do any good thing without grace. But Jesus can do all in us. Therefore if in prayer you know not how to lift up your heart, be not afraid, He is with you, He will lift you up, and it may be that in such passive surrender of your duty to Him you will more wholly abase and destroy your pride and self-sufficiency than by the most earnest self-conscious efforts at abasement.

In conclusion, Jesus humbled Himself before God more than any other could do, because more than any other He knew what God is. Infinite knowledge as God, infinite abasement as man. Would you realise this more fully, prostrate yourself before the Altar, and there, with the eye of faith, behold *Jesus in the* Blessed Eucharist. What humility, *what self-abasement* is there! God hidden beneath

sacramental species, unseen, unheard, passive, ndent upon men, who handle and consume . Where can you find anything so lowly, or so t? May we be truly joined to Him in that sed Sacrament of His Love, uniting all our :ness, all our dependence with His, gladly pting helplessness and abjection for His Sake. 're all, let us learn never to be cast down because ır weakness. If you cannot attain to high :mplation, abase yourself; if you are wearied distractions, abase yourself; if your soul is in r mortal agony, abase yourself; and thus out ur misery and grief there will spring a fertile :st of blessings, and you will learn in truth holiness to love and imitate the humiliations abasement of Jesus.

XXXV.

The Interior Sorrows of Jesus.

"*He filleth me with bitterness.*"—Job ix. 18.

ALL contemplation of Jesus should be with the view of attaining conformity to His Likeness; and seen under this aspect, the consideration of His hidden sufferings is one from which our cowardly nature may well shrink, even more than from His visible sufferings. These were not continuous, nor is our conformity to them necessarily to be literal. Between His lowly Birth at Bethlehem, and the sufferings and ignominies of His Passion, there was an interval, of which we know little; but as soon as we begin to penetrate more deeply into His hidden life, we shall find that from first to last His whole sojourn upon earth was one ceaseless flood of sorrows, which those who would follow Him must in a measure share. "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."[1] Also, there are many who would fain share the joys and triumphs of Jesus, while they recoil from participating in His sorrows and anguish. Yet he who truly loves his Lord would choose to taste of that bitter cup sooner than all earthly gladness. Let *us* reverently approach, and contemplate His

[1] Lam. i. 12.

ered Heart in its woes, until we have learnt refrom to welcome all those interior sufferings ich make us like our Lord.

And first, what was the cause of that bitter guish wherein His Heart was steeped? Was it chiefly in that He knew how many souls would come to Him that they might have life? thly bitterness springs from the withholding of rest and satisfaction, from the deprivation of hly love, the chief delight of the heart, given received. But all through our Dear Lord's hly career all these sources of consolation were held from Him; He met with nothing worthy His Love, He received nought save ingratitude n His own creatures. "When I would comfort self against sorrow, my heart is faint within me."[1] Nor can we conceive or fathom the depth his sorrow. Jesus put aside all earthly consolations, refusing all satisfaction of the senses, as worthy of Him, and that even in their ordinary lawful use, as the atonement for our unlawful ulgence therein. Immeasurable, incomprehensible as was His power to love, He never gave an hly relief to that yearning affection, which is so beyond our reach to imagine. The innate corruption of sin made all creatures unworthy of that e, and flooded the Heart of Jesus with bitterness. could not repress His intense desire to love the ature He had made in His own image and likeness, neither could He satisfy this desire, or rest Love on that which was guilty—and hence a stant pang to His most loving Heart. "I have

[1] Jer. viii. 18.

trodden the winepress alone."[1] And each one of us, you and I, have added to this bitterness, alas! through the unholiness which has made us unworthy of His Love, and through our readiness to prefer that of the creature to His Infinite Love.

Another cause of His Heart's sorrow was the ingratitude of those for whom He had done so much. From the moment of His Birth, He was repulsed and rejected on all sides by man, on whom He had poured out such endless mercies and miracles. His own friends betrayed and denied Him. "O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me."[2] Remember how cruelly bitter ingratitude is to an ordinary affectionate heart, and think what it must have been to such a Heart as that of Jesus, Whose gifts had been so far beyond all other gifts! "It is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord."[3] "My Heart is turned within Me."[4] And dare we say that we are not numbered among those graceless souls who, in spite of all His favours, have outraged the Heart of Jesus with their ingratitude? O my Saviour, have not I too added to Thy Sorrows, have not I wounded Thee? May my future gratitude be deep in proportion, and for bitterness may I offer Thee love and sweetness!

God Alone is the soul's delight. You may heap together every possible delight which this world can give, and strive to satisfy your soul therewith, but all in vain, you might as well seek to fill the ocean with a single drop of water. Nought save

[1] *Isa. lxiii.* 3. [2] Mic. vi. 3. [3] Jer. ii. 19. [4] Lam. i. 20.

God can satisfy the soul, and to be deprived of Him is to be plunged in bitterness and sorrow. But the Soul of Jesus was steeped in this sorrow throughout His earthly sojourn, during which He refused all heavenly consolation, putting it away from Him, choosing to drink the very dregs of that bitter cup which He had accepted. "Therefore said I, Look away from Me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort Me."[1] And when upon the Cross the soothing potion was offered Him, "He would not drink." There were three causes for this voluntary rejection of all consolation by the Soul of Jesus. That Gracious Soul was filled with grief at the sight of all the crimes by which the whole earth continually outraged God's Goodness, while men gave themselves up to self-indulgence and pleasure. Therefore He took upon Him the burden of all these sins, and in atonement for them He rejected all heavenly consolation. "He was grieved for the hardness of their heart." A true penitent refuses comfort, and Jesus was the One Penitent for all creation, and His Soul refused consolation alike from Heaven and earth, according to the determination of His own Justice. It was thus that He made a ceaseless atonement for all the idle and sinful pleasures of men; He Who "did no sin" bearing the weight of all our sin. Again, the Soul of Jesus was filled with sorrow by reason of His compassion for those who were living in their blind sinfulness, wandering like lost sheep. How could the Good Shepherd but be sad when He saw His sheep straying and scattered! He hungered and thirsted for

[1] Isa. xxii. 4.

their return to the way of life, and because "they would not," He was full of sorrow, and could not be comforted. "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."[1] That compassion reached on to us likewise, and we should measure our wanderings by His pity, and by the bitterness wherewith we have caused His Soul to overflow. O my Jesus, how have I grieved Thee! how hast Thou loved me! may I never wander more from Thee!

The third cause which filled His Soul with ceaseless sorrow, was the knowledge that numbers of those He came to save were daily rushing down to hell, because they despised His saving merits. For this He was "compassed with gall and travail. . . . Remembering Mine afflictions and My misery, the wormwood and the gall."[2] His Father's Hand was heavy upon Him, and He was, so to say, set against Himself. Moreover, during the whole of His life, the Soul of Jesus was filled with the bitterness of His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, foreknowing as He did the overwhelming griefs which pressed so heavily upon Him at that final hour. It is only by that mysterious Bloody Sweat, and by that agony of prayer on the Mount of Olives, that we can obtain the slightest glimpse of what His Sacred Soul endured all through His earthly sojourn; or how He bore it all until at last it exceeded, and He "died in the bitterness of His soul."[3] Let us remember with penitence and awe that we have grieved Him thus, not once alone, but each time that we have fallen into sin; the waves of our *impurity* have gone over His Head, a very sea of

[1] *Prov.* xxvii. 7. [2] Lam. iii. 5, 19. [3] Job xxii. 25.

erness, and our reckless pursuit of sinful pleasure
cost Him many tears. Did not His Love and
odness towards us claim a far different return?
oe be to us, O Blessed Jesus, if we do not offer
iee our hearts, and whatsoever sorrows Thou
ayest lay upon them in return. Teach us to come
Thee, a willing sacrifice, that we may learn of
hee, Who gave Thyself for us.

As a rule, there is no condition which we accept
ith less resignation than that of interior suffering;
nd consequently none from which we derive less
profit. Those who are willing to accept other
crosses, lose their balance under interior anguish,
and that the rather that few spiritual guides attempt
to train souls in the love and appreciation of such
trials. Yet they are very common; beginners have
their share, the holiest and most advanced are by
no means exempt, and meanwhile there is no
spiritual condition which is turned to so little
account. Let us dwell awhile on the value of this
inward sorrow, and see how specially it conforms
us to the likeness of Jesus.

To those who are earnestly seeking after holiness,
then, I would say, Have you ever deeply pondered
over the interior sorrows and sufferings of Jesus,
with a view to penetrating their motives. Perhaps,
amid all your careful meditations, you have dwelt
but little, and without result, on this point, not
striving to learn what were His intentions or designs,
or applying the subject to yourself? Yet our Dear
Lord gave Himself up to all His sufferings solely
that we might learn to bear ours; nay, they were
actually ours which He bore. "Surely He hath

borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,"[1] that their hardness and sharpness might be to us, since our Saviour and our God ha them. Such being the case, should you n welcome inward trial, than murmur a against it? What need was there for your Saviour to accept such bitter pangs, save th might be lightened? If He willingly b griefs, will you not seek to imitate His I bear them willingly too, for His Sake?

In truth those who thoroughly renounce a consolations through perfect detachment, their soul marvellously relieved. There is wherein mortification is more difficult. Yo perfect detachment, but no sooner are you inward desolation than you begin to mur the unreality of that detachment appears. had sincerely renounced all spiritual con these trials would not have met with re because you would have been prepared f The followers of our suffering Lord must at any inward delights, but rather dwell bitterness wherewith His Sacred Heart w and say with Job, "The things that my so to touch are as my sorrowful meat."[2]

A great deal is said, by you probably as l about union with Jesus. Unquestionably chief aim set before us all: but if we se with His Sacred Suffering Heart, ought we prepared to suffer with Him, freely accepti ever likens us to our Lord?

This anguish pressed so heavily on Him

[1] Isa. liii. 4. [2] Job vi.

would have sunk under it, not in Gethsemane only, but all His life long, but for His Father's miraculous upholding. He "went softly all His years in the bitterness of His Soul,"[1] "filled with bitterness."[2] And dare we seek for spiritual sweetness and consolation? May God give us grace, you who read, and I who write, to be of the little company who follow Him, willing to share the gall and bitterness of His Sacred Heart!

We all know that in the spiritual life we must expect to meet with much that is trying and hard to bear—this life is called by David "a vale of misery." "Thou hast showed Thy people heavy things, Thou hast given us a drink of deadly wine." And if this is so as regards outer things, no less is it the case with the interior life; all real afflictions touch the heart and soul, and thus pressed from within and without, how can we be other than sorrow laden and oppressed, "compassed with gall and travail?" But these sorrows are no slight blessing, let them spring whence they will, inasmuch as more than all else they serve to detach us from creatures. In one shape or another our sorrows spring from the creature, and thus we learn to let go our hold thereof, God's Grace works in our hearts, and we realise that we cannot find elsewhere the rest which comes solely from His Indwelling. We learn the hollowness of earthly comfort, which cannot ease our pain, our souls are purified as earthly snares are removed, and we cleave more and more to His gracious promise, "Blessed are ye that weep now." Tradition says that our Incarnate Lord was never

[1] Isa. xxxviii. 15. [2] Lam. iii. 17.

seen to show any outward sign of mirth. Does not this thought sanctify the sorrows of life, borne meekly and with the help of God's Grace? There too, there is no more acceptable offering to God than our interior griefs: "A broken and contrite heart He will not despise."

Can you look back upon your past life, and not feel how much you need "to go softly in the bitterness of your soul?" Go back as far as you can recall your sins in each several period of life, age, time, and place, and surely you will confess that sorrow and bitterness are your fitting portion, and that you deserve nought, save "the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction," while you review and mourn over past sin. How much more when you look on to the Awful Day of reckoning, when for each one of those past sins you will be judged? How can you fail to be filled with fear and trembling? Remember, too, that this solemn reckoning is close at hand, since death is ever near. How, then, can you venture to seek after earthly consolations? is not the carefulness of repentance far more befitting?

Look on yet farther: bethink you of Eternity. Remember that if once the gates of Paradise are shut upon you, they will never be opened, and then if you dare, reject the healing sorrow which may win you an entrance there! Surely the thought of those four last things, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell, are enough to make any one willing to pass his earthly life in fear and trembling! Is not *such* sorrow, such compunction of heart, far safer *than* any joy? Thrice blessed that soul whose

ing wounds are ever open to cry out with the ophet, "My soul hath my affliction and misery l in remembrance, and is humbled in me; this recall to my mind, therefore I have hope."[1] et thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps,"[2] ence thou canst look around upon the many ises thou hast to grieve, and humble thyself fore God. One word of caution. Do not plunge urself in self-sought sorrow, but see that you duly ize that *via dolorosa* if it pleases God to lead you it, and thereby to bring you into real, lasting nformity to the Likeness of your Dear Lord and viour.

[1] Lam. iii. 19, 20. [2] Jer. xxxi. 21.

XXXVI.

Christ a Victim.

"He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."—HEB. iv. 26.

AMONG all the characteristics of our Dear Lord's earthly sojourn none is so marked as that of a Victim, the very object of His Incarnation being to offer Himself a Sacrifice for man; and surely none save God Incarnate could have descended so low, while at the same time He raised the spirit of sacrifice so high. But the price was costly, and as a victim for us He endured more than our earthliness can ever measure, however devoutly we contemplate Him as our sacrifice.

A victim is one who suffers, who is destroyed by suffering. There are various kinds of victims—the involuntary victim of others, the individual victim who makes satisfaction for himself alone, the inevitable victim of hell, and the willing victim who either causes or accepts his suffering for the sake of others. Again, a man may be a victim from different causes, interior trials sent by God, temptations of the devil, persecutions of men, or physical sufferings; as likewise there are divers objects in *his sufferings*—God's truth, atonement for sin, or *the satisfaction* of Divine Justice. We all know

that Jesus was a voluntary Victim; for though the Father gave the Son, the Son "offered up Himself."[1] He was the Victim for all mankind, an active and passive Victim, laden with sufferings, self-imposed and accepted at the hands of others. His one sole object was to make atonement for man: "to put away sin:" His Heart was the victim of His Love, His Soul the victim of Divine Justice, His Sacred Body the victim of persecution. His Heart and Soul were filled with the spirit of sacrifice during His whole earthly life, as well as His Body, which was externally crushed thereby. A wondrous lesson, and a wondrous Teacher! They who would learn that lesson must learn it in silence and prayer at the foot of the Cross.

Those who have never felt the piercings of Divine Love can scarcely realise its exquisite sharpness; still less can they realise the bitter pain which Jesus bore as the victim of love. His tender Heart was pierced for all whom He loved, for the faithful souls washed in His Blood, for His consecrated Brides, and for those souls to whom God has given special grace. That Divine Heart saw in the fulness of its Love how many souls that have been washed in His Precious Blood would dishonour and profane it by their sins; how they would be lost in spite of the shedding of that Blood, because they would not come to Him and live. They were sprinkled with His Blood, its mark can never be effaced, and He loves them so tenderly, that their ingratitude rends His Heart with anguish. God forbid that you should be among those who have thus pierced His

[1] Heb. vii. 27.

Heart: you are "elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ."[1] He "loved and washed you from your sins in His own Blood;" beware that you profane it not. Examine yourself lest you pierce afresh those bleeding wounds of His most tender Heart.

How deeply too was His Heart wounded by the foreknowledge that so many souls who had been consecrated to Him by solemn vows would nevertheless betray Him, and take the world's side, despising His precepts, filled with vanity and self-indulgence, slaves to flesh and blood. He foresaw that there would be faithless souls among His Brides, "wandering upon every high hill, and under every green tree;"[3] "not remembering Him, and fretting Him,"[4] and His Heart bled to see those to whom He should be All in all thus forsaking Him for the world, the flesh, and the devil. If you are one of His consecrated servants, search yourself closely: cleave to His words, follow His steps, cry out, "Thou art the guide of my youth."[5] Remember that "love is strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave."[6]

Again, to some of His chosen servants God grants special graces, corresponding to His designs for their progress in holiness. But too often such privileged souls ignore or resist this grace, instead of giving themselves up wholly to its empire, and thus pierce the Heart of Jesus with a sharp wound. Can we bear to think of Him seeking, striving after souls which will not be won; souls which frustrate

[1] *1 Pet. i. 2.* [2] Rev. i. 5. [3] Jer. ii. 20. [4] Ezek. xvi. 43. [5] *Jer. iii. 4.* [6] Cant. viii. 6.

all the endeavours of God's Holy Spirit, slighting and repulsing their Lord, hardened, not attracted by the outpouring of His gracious love! "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me."[1] He would have brought those souls to perfection, and they would not—the creature dared to resist the Creator's purpose: He deigned to choose them, and to "have a delight therein," and they snatched themselves out of His Hand in their wayward faithlessness, thereby steeping the Heart of Jesus in a very ocean of bitterness. Look home, and see whether He has not conferred some such favours upon your soul; and if so, whether you have not resisted Him. Has He chosen you from among many as the object of His Love, and have you rejected that love, seeking other consolations than His? Bethink you ere it be too late, what it is to despise the offers of your God, to frustrate His designs, to close your heart to His Voice, when He vouchsafes to single you out for His special favour. Grieve bitterly that you have ever wounded Him, and ask Him to teach you how to serve Him unreservedly from henceforth.

But while the Heart of Jesus suffered from Love, His Soul suffered no less from Divine Justice. Earthly justice is but human, and Jesus said of the trials laid on Him by His human judges, "The ploughers ploughed upon My back, and made long furrows;" but when the Justice of God fell upon His Soul, as the victim for man's guilt, the Lamb of God cried out, "All Thy waves and storms are gone over Me!" "Thy Hand is heavy upon Me!"

[1] Isa. i. 2.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? beho[illegible] and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorro[illegible] which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord ha[illegible] t afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger?" A[illegible] this sorrow was not during the comparatively br[illegible]e space of His Passion only, but all through H[illegible]is Life.

I. His Soul was given up to desolation and anguish, and forsaken of the Father. Man deserved to be forsaken of God, and inasmuch as Jesus took upon Him the sins of mankind, Divine Justice laid man's penalty upon Him. "Jesus was made a surety."[1] All through His sojourn upon earth He bore that bitter agony, of which some faint indication was given in the Garden, and upon the Cross. "No man had pity on Him." "I looked and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold."[2] Are not these plaintive words still too often applicable to ourselves? Who cares, above all, for His sorrows and desolations?

II. The Saviour's Soul was afflicted by a continual foreshadowing of all the anguish of His Passion. When the hour itself came, each pang followed in due succession; but all through His life that Passion had been ever present to the Soul of Jesus in each bitter detail; the Agony, the Scourging, the Crown of Thorns, the Cross,—He had endured them all from the time He became Incarnate, although His Sacred Body endured them but for a day. Look within the Infant Heart of Jesus; it was already pierced with the nails and

[1] Heb. vii. 22. [2] Isa. lxiii. 5.

which were hereafter to satisfy God's justice
n, the Victim of the world.

Yet keener still was the perception with
that All-loving Soul was endowed of all those
vhich would be lost in spite of His Love and
ufferings. In the light of Divine Justice He
early how His Blood was shed in vain for
nor could any eye perceive as His did how
was the treasure of that Love, the worth
se sufferings, or the misery of those lost

He Alone bore the sins of all mankind, and
cumulation weighed upon His pure and spot-
ul with a deadly crushing weight. "He hath
l upon Him the fury of His anger."[1] There
was Purity like His, and that purity had to
ıe impurity of all mankind.

Hence arose another grievous infliction,
r, that inasmuch as Jesus was the sin-offering
.n, He bore the curse which man merited;
.ord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."[2]
ıath afflicted Him in the day of His fierce
'3 He was the Victim of God's wrath upon
nd what could be more terrible to the Son
hus to taste, though it were for others, His
's displeasure?

Again, numberless as were the sins of man
present, and future, Jesus experienced the
thereof, not collectively alone, but indi-
y and separately. All the blackness and
s of each several sin committed by man
l and penetrated His Heart, weighing it

[1] xlii. 25. [2] Isa. liii. 6. [3] Lam. i. 12.

down with an anguish, in comparison of which all mere bodily pangs were light.

VII. Moreover His Soul realised, as none other could do, all the terrors of an offended God; the true weight of Divine Justice, the mighty price it demanded. Who, save the Son of God, could have borne so inconceivable a load?

Who is there that is ready to follow Him? He gave Himself up to be forsaken—but we sink into hopeless discouragement at the first breath of inward desolation. He bore the bitter knowledge of all that was coming on Him, and we are fain to put away every foreshadowing of pain, and dwell only upon what is soothing and acceptable. He bore the weight and accumulation of all sin; but who among us is willing to abide under a shadow of reproach; who, even while using formulas of self-condemnation, does not abound in self-esteem?

Jesus was "made a curse for us," but do we not all covet the approbation and esteem of our fellow-men? Jesus was filled with bitterness by the separate foulness of each individual sin committed upon earth, but do we not either fail to perceive the enormity of our own sins, or seek to hide their loathsomeness under one or other specious cloak? He endured agony from the consciousness of what it is to offend God; while we too often slur over our offences with cold indifference as things of no great moment. We are like those of whom the Prophet says that they "have broken God's yoke, and burst His bands, and said, I will not serve."[1]

But in order that there might be nothing lacking,

[1] Jer. ii. 20.

iat Jesus should be a full and perfect Victim,
oo must needs bear their part, and offer His
in sacrifice. Our human faculties are
ible of realising or weighing His spiritual
ngs, but He bore all His bodily sufferings
e might in part at least realise what He did
. His physical tortures were sharper than
her possible tortures, because no other being
ad such capacities for suffering. No other
vas ever so exquisitely and sensitively framed ;
ver the ceaseless sufferings of His Soul had
ed that Body more than ordinarily susceptible
ering. Certain of the Fathers have imagined
ie devil and his angels had possession of His
ioners, maddening their rage while they had
over their lamb-like Victim ; at all events
ow that mercy and pity were banished from
ene of His torture. Think of all this, and
you dare pamper your flesh with luxury and
lulgence ! We need not dwell on the in-
of His sufferings—His accusers avowedly
His very judge owning Him to be innocent
condemned Him.

lly, the characteristics of a true victim may
imed up thus. Unmurmuring endurance,—
vas brought as a lamb to the slaughter, no
f complaint fell from His Lips, no answer to
vho derided and insulted Him. But do not
words burst from you at the slightest injury
oyance ?

true victim never cries out, " It is enough."
ver ready to bear more. But are you not apt
a limit to your trials, and say, " I cannot bear

more." Suffering is the vocation of a true vic
—"I have given the dearly beloved of my soul i
the hand of her enemies."[1] Every one mi
assault Him, but do not you resist your crosses
though they were an injustice? The true victir
willing to be last and lowest of all—"As for M
am a worm and no man." Who ever so ab
himself as Jesus? and who perhaps ever so lo
to be exalted as yourself? Do you not often sh
from seeing others preferred to you, do you not
high places and recoil from all degradation?

Lastly, the true victim yields himself u
destruction and death as his natural and expe
end. All His life long Jesus was giving Hi
up to death, until the moment when on the C
He said, "It is finished." Is not yours a prec
opposite spirit, cherishing your body, sparing i
possible discomfort, aiming at spiritual ease
satisfaction? Beware lest, while talking of
victim spirit in fine flowing words, you practi
become rather the victim of passion, sensualit
ambition, than the victim of Jesus.

Contemplate Jesus in the Blessed Sacra
and consider how perfect a Victim He is the
What patience, what lowliness, what love! T
it is at the Altar that we may best learn the
of a true victim, remembering that He Wl
glorified in Heaven yet deigns to come on
our "Saving Victim," opening wide the Gat
Heaven. There meditate upon Him, learn to
and follow Him, and be transformed into His l
ness in His Holy Communion.

[1] Jer. xii. 7.

XXXVII.

The Cross of Shame.

"*That Thou mayest bear Thine own shame.*"—Ezek. xvi. 54.

IT may be asked which is hardest to bear, the Cross of shame or the Cross of anguish? No doubt the lower more material mind will deem this last the sharpest, inasmuch as such are ever more keenly alive to what touches the body and senses than to that which is invisible and spiritual. But those whose temperament is more finely strung, in whom that which is spiritual predominates over that which is natural, will not hesitate to pronounce shame a keener anguish than any mere bodily pains can be. And from this point of view we must contemplate the shame of our Dear Lord's Cross; for if mere human beings are capable of feeling that which touches the spirit as so far more bitter than material pangs, how much more so He Whose Incarnate Godhead was sensitive, refined, spiritual far beyond all that we can conceive. How far more grievous must the shame of the Cross have been to Him than its physical agony! We are so apt to confuse these two sides of our Saviour's sufferings, that it will be well to dwell specially awhile on the Cross of shame; the rather because opportunities of following our Great Example in the

endurance of that trial are more often set before us than any approach to His physical anguish. Ignominy and shame were heaped upon that Gracious Saviour; He was treated as the least and lowest of men, "the outcast of the people." He was mocked at, and esteemed as a fanatical madman. Reverence shudders at the bare words as applied to the King of kings, the All-Powerful Word of God; and yet we too often turn from His shame, and refuse to meditate upon that Cross whereby we are healed. It is not wise; we are unlikely ever to be called upon to endure His bodily pains, but the Cross of shame is no rare lot to many who would follow Him, and although it is human nature to shun all that savours of abjection, contempt, and the "foolishness of the Cross," we may well beware lest thereby we shun Jesus also. O Blessed Jesus, how often Thou art shunned and despised by those who are pledged to cleave to Thee in Thy shame and lowliness. Teach us, dear Lord, to imitate Thy patience and Thy humility, while we gaze upon Thee.

It was the Father Himself Who made His Son to be "the outcast of the people," and prepared the way for His humiliations at the hands of men. The Father in His hidden Wisdom seems to have chosen all that earth had of lowliest as the portion of His Son, from the manger to the Cross. When He was taken prisoner in the Garden of Gethsemane, His captors came armed with swords and staves, so that Jesus asked, "Are ye come out as against *a thief?*" and having seized Him, they bound Him, *and led* Him away, as though He were some hideous

riminal. They spit upon that Gracious Face, be-
ore which angels worshipped, and struck Him with
he palms of their hands, He

"Who with one rough word
Their idol world and them could sweep for aye away."

hey rejected Him, preferring a common robber;
hey crucified Him between two thieves. What
ore could have been done to put Him to shame?
et us dwell awhile on the lessons He sets before
s therein.

There is a hidden abjection in which the sufferer
alone, unknown, "walking humbly with his God,"
o one knowing aught of his doings, save God Only,
Vho therefore imparts Himself the more freely to
lis sorrowful servant. This hidden abjection may
ike for its model the lowly birth of Jesus, hidden
y the darkness of night from all save a chosen few
-"He hath brought me into darkness, but not light"
-by the lowliness of His childhood in the carpenter's
op, unknown to all save Mary and Joseph. Yet
e would fain be seen and known of men, and we
rink from obscurity as though it were disgrace!

Another form of abjection which is even more
ying is that wherein our humiliation is obvious to
l around, and which for that reason is well-nigh
tolerable to some minds. Nevertheless, when
eekly borne, such a trial wins respect and pity;
ten succour. Jesus bore it, but without any
leviation. There is a deserved shame, but which
evertheless would gladly be concealed by him on
hom it falls. This Jesus could never know, but it
elongs essentially to men, and if rightly used we
ay *find it* "a place of refuge, and a covert from

storm and from rain." Then there is unjust humiliation whereby one highly gifted is set aside, either by jealousy or persecution. But what indignities can be so unjust as those which were heaped upon Jesus when He became as the "offscouring of the people?" What is any injustice that we can possibly incur compared to this? Even if our abjection lasts through life, hiding its victim as in a tomb, surely the life of Jesus was similar,—outcast, despised, rejected to the last. But who among us is willing to bear such a lot, to live and die, outcast and despised? Jesus deserved not His shame; He bore it to teach us to bear what is laid upon us by God's Providence; and yet we who do in truth deserve all wherewith God visits us, murmur so soon as we are cast down and humbled. Even if our humiliation were undeserved, what better safeguard for the soul is there than a lowly condition, wherein it is screened from pride and self-esteem? Who that remembers Jesus, bound, spit upon, buffeted, crucified between thieves, can dare to complain, or even grieve at being despised, set aside, or lightly esteemed by the world? If the world has "called the Master of the house Beelzebub," how much more His servants?

There are some minds to whom scorn and ridicule are the hardest of all humiliations; yet who was ever scorned as Jesus? "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn." He was insulted and mocked; men bade Him depart out of their coasts; they reviled Him, accused Him of being possessed by a *devil*; "the poison of asps was under their lips" *when they* spake against Him. When He was

Carried before Caiaphas, the soldiers who kept Him mocked Him, blindfolding Him, as though aught could be hidden from His Eyes; striking Him, and crying out, "Prophesy who is it that smote Thee!" He was dragged from one judgment-hall to another, the mocking crowd pursuing Him,—the High Priest, Pilate, Herod,—all joining in insult; when He said that He was a King, fresh derision was heaped upon Him; the purple robe, the reed sceptre, the crown of thorns,—where could contempt and shame find a fiercer display, and this on Him Whom saints and angels cannot worthily adore—Jesus, Glory and Splendour of the Eternal Father, now become a very scorn of the people for the love He bore to us! They bent the knee before Him, in mocking homage, and He accepted it all calmly, meekly, as though it were His due. Was ever such humiliation! was there ever so great meekness! and that in Him Who was King of kings and Lord of lords! This is the school in which our Divine Master teaches us the lesson of enduring contempt meekly; whether it be undeserved, open insolence in word or act, or secret treacherous contempt, He bore it all. O Blessed Jesus, teach me to follow Thee in Thy humiliations, to love contempt and abasement, gladly to taste the bitter cup with Thee, saying with a saint of old, "If I can do no more, let me at least accept one bitter blow for love of Thee."[1]

Justice is strict, and surely we who have too often treated God's laws with contempt, deserve to be

[1] "Si non plus accipiam pro crucifixo meo, saltem unum ictum *pretiosum habeo*."—S. ADALBERT.

despised of men; with what right do we complain when vilely esteemed? Intrinsically contemptible, "a worm, the son of man which is less than a worm,"[1] what can we expect, save to be trodden under foot? We have often done despite to God through human respect, preferring the creature to Him; we each know the secrets of our own hearts,—let us ask ourselves how can such as we are desire the praise of men? Still more, remembering the low esteem in which Jesus was held, can His consecrated servants hesitate to accept all humiliation and contempt? Can they dare to be sensitive to neglect or even insult? After all, what is the great evil we dread in being despised of men, that we are so eager to escape their contempt? At best we lose an imaginary position in the estimation of our fellow-creatures—a mere empty shadow, unworthy of a serious thought. To be so cast down at a touch of scorn indicates either the weakness of a petty mind or great self-ignorance. Still, in spite of all that can be said, we are sorry followers of Jesus in this matter. We, Christians and sworn servants of a despised Master, shrink almost like the Jews of old from His abject lowliness. We ignore Him so soon as His Name brings a touch of reproach upon us, and His own friends reject and deny Him.

Holy Scripture tells us of "the folly of the Cross;" and Jesus bore this before the judgment-seat of Herod, when He was treated as a madman. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."[2]

[1] Job xxv. 6. [2] 1 Cor. i. 27.

It is a common characteristic among those who are deprived of reason to be unable to reply when questioned; and even so when Jesus was brought before Herod, who "for a long time was desirous to see Him," "He answered nothing." As one incapable of understanding what was said and done, the gracious Lord endured the "mocking and setting at nought" which followed, the sending backwards and forwards, the gorgeous robe,—He bore it all without a murmur.

Whose heart does not sink at the horrid spectacle, when He, Heavenly Wisdom Itself, was treated as a fool, despised, and mocked. The Incarnate Word, "the Wisdom of the Father;"—surely physical weakness and degradation, earthly sorrows and trials, the Cross and death, seem incompatible with His greatness and dignity; yet that very greatness enabled Him to bear them. But the imputation of folly seems to exceed all—nevertheless He accepted it, without uttering one word whereby to set it aside, as though He sought out every depth of ignominy, the better to teach us abjection and humility. Thus our Master preaches the "foolishness of the Cross" in His own Person, thereby rebuking "the wisdom of the world," "confounding the things which are mighty."

It is easy to see the evil of this worldly wisdom; full of pride, its every affectation of humility arising out of secret presumption and self-reliance. "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight."[1] Nothing can be more contrary to the humility and simplicity of

[1] Isa. v. 21.

Christ, the rather that its aim is to reduce all life to the most purely material principles. Moreover, it is directly opposed to all Gospel precepts. They seek to overthrow the earthly spirit, and subject it wholly to the captivity of Christ; but the wisdom of the world "is wise to do evil, and to do good it has no knowledge."[1] It cleaves firmly to all that is easy and attractive, and rejects all else, however holy. The earthly spirit quenches all influences of the Holy Ghost; He seeks a docile yielding mind, —but those who are full of this world's wisdom resist whatever humbles their pride and thwarts their own conceit. In truth, this fleshly wisdom is often a greater hindrance to conversion than downright ungodliness; and that because it is so treacherous, with its outward semblance of goodness and discretion, so that they who most need to be converted are unconscious of their need. "The wisdom of the wise men shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall be hid."[2] Nothing can be more loathsome in God's Sight than this worldly wisdom, and yet how largely it prevails among the followers of Him Who rebuked it by vouchsafing to be esteemed last and lowest of all. Let us cast away that carnal wisdom which is "enmity with God," and cleave stedfastly to the blessed "foolishness of the Cross." Let it be our daily rule, and may we choose gladly to be counted as fools while we follow the One True Wisdom.

In conclusion, renounce self without any reserve, if you would take up the Cross of shame with Jesus; *that* cannot be unless all lingering traces of self-

[1] Jer. iv. 22. [2] Isa. xxix. 14.

love are crushed. Strive against self-consideration and indulgence, else how can you attempt to drink of His bitter cup of scorn? So long as you are sensitive to your own comfort and interest, you will cower before the first touch of man's contempt, and forsake your Lord in His anguish. Seek specially to cultivate the spirit of simplicity in whatever you do; train your heart in abhorrence of this world's wisdom. Unless you resist its fatal spirit, it will assuredly pollute you, and fill you with aversion for that sacred "folly," even "Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God," without which you will at last find yourself to have strayed far from the true paths—"thinking yourself wise, you have become a fool."

XXXVIII.

How to Submit to God in Seasons of Great Trial.

"*Humble yourselves therefore under the Mighty Hand of God.*"—1 PET. v. 6.

I DO not propose now to enter upon the general subject of affliction: man's life is full of trials, and their right use is a wide field for consideration. But there are certain blows which come upon God's creatures with such a stunning force and desolation, that all earthly help seems vain, and the stricken heart is fain to cry out with Job, "Miserable comforters are ye all!"[1] Grievous sickness, temporal ruin, cruel slanders, secret overwhelming temptation, sometimes visit a man, baffling all ordinary consolations; and in truth, if they are to be profitably borne, they must be met with no ordinary remedy. Under such trials no real help will be found, save in so far as we have recourse to the source and principle of consolation in those eternal truths which will close our lips to murmur, and enable us to feel that all our keenest pangs may be converted into blessings. Sad, indeed, it is to see men sinking under trial, because they know not how to seek that strength which alone can sustain them. There are four points which, if duly weighed,

[1] Job xvi. 2.

will strengthen us to bear and sanctify whatever God may lay upon us. (1.) Such trials are His appointment. (2.) They are ordered and regulated by His All-wise Providence. (3.) They are actually brought about by His Will. (4.) Their precise measure and weight depend upon that Will. All these truths are linked together in a gracious sequence: whatever is of God's appointment issues from His Divine Providence; that Providence is governed by His Will overruling all things, a Will which co-operates with His Glory and Love.

Let us assume that some crushing grief has come upon you. Remember Who has sent it. "Before the world was," out of love for you, and to set forward the glory of His Dear Son, God ordained that this special trial should visit you; "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world."[1] Bethink you that He Who is Eternal duly weighed that which He appointed, and that what He appoints is irrevocable. "I am the Lord, I change not."[2] Your part is to accept that which He lays upon you, knowing that its design is to save, not to destroy you. But you must render more than passive endurance; He requires willing submission: "Bring your necks under the yoke of the King, and serve Him, and live."[3] Your conscience may tell you why God's sentence is on you, but if not, if you are not conscious of any special reason for this severe dealing, then above all is the time to submit yourself absolutely and blindly, certain that God knows what such trial is to work in you, and content to bear it without

[1] Eph. i. 4. [2] Mal. iii. 6. [3] Jer. xxvii. 12.

murmur or questioning. Learn to say, "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled."[1] I would not avert one blow Thy Mercy wills to deal me, however hard it be. Impatience and fretting under trial does but increase our suffering, whereas such meek submission sanctifies all suffering, and fills the tortured heart with peace amid its anguish.

Moreover, a firm belief in His Providence, His Goodness and Wisdom, which suit every trial to the sufferer's need, is a great help towards patient endurance. If sharp sickness be laid on you, it may be that you did not use the gift of health wisely, or to God's Glory; perhaps you abused it in seeking mere earthly enjoyment, and God in His Love calls you apart from the world, to open your eyes to your soul's need: He lays a chastening Hand upon your body, but while He tries it with pain and distress, He will not fail to soothe and strengthen it as is best for you. If temporal loss be sent, it may be that the sufferer prized his wealth unduly, as a means of indulging in pleasure, luxury, or pride, and so God's Providence withdraws in love that which was ministering to His destruction. So under the trials which come through our fellow-men, such troubles are sent to detach us from the creature, from human respect, and from clinging over fondly to any earthly attachments. And in temptation, that same Loving Providence does not allow it to come upon His children unadvisedly; *He strengthens* one to meet its assaults, trains

[1] Ps. cxix. 75.

another to greater watchfulness lest he fall, tries a third with trifling temptation until he be on his guard against such as are greater; and teaches a fourth to appreciate the special grace and use of temptation when rightly met. "Thou, O God, art gracious and true, long-suffering, and in mercy ordering all things."[1] Thou sparest us with all the tenderness and forethought of a mother's love, leading us gently onwards, until we learn the right road and attain the wished-for end. However the natural man may flinch under Thy discipline, surely the spirit must bless and thank Thee not only for leading us by the strait road of saving sorrow, but also for the numberless alleviations Thy Love provides by the way. Through the body's wound the soul is healed; the earthly cup turned to bitterness is but a leading to the fount of everlasting joy; disappointment and humiliation point the way to a never-failing Friend in Heaven. Who that seeks to know the reason of his trial upon his knees before God will fail sooner or later to recognise His Gracious Hand, training, moulding, turning all to the sufferer's sanctification? But, alas! too often we rebel, we fret and kick against our troubles, and murmur at the hardness of our lot; blind and unwise, knowing not "the things that are for our healing."

No less needful is it for us to remember that God's sentence must be carried out—smiting, crushing as seemeth Him good. It is His sentence which lays us on a wearisome bed of sickness, casts us down from our high estate, or harasses us with distresses from within or without. The only safety

[1] Wisd. xv. 1.

at such times is the remembrance that all such pressure is laid on us by His Holy Will, "counting yourselves happy because ye endure." Seen in this light, sickness and pain are but an expression of His healing Love; all sorrow and temptation is but as a purifying fire through which we are to pass, meet for His Presence; every touch of His Dear Hand a privilege, even though human weakness may smart and shrink beneath it. If Jesus Himself was a meet Sacrifice to the Father's Will, what are we poor earthly creatures that we should murmur, or grudge our little offering of health, of all even that makes life sweet to us, of that very life itself? Let His Holy Will work in you, whatever it may cost you; let it reign supreme, and do you strive to offer yourself and all you have as a willing and acceptable sacrifice to it. Worship the Hand Which smites, with Job, who "fell down and worshipped, saying, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord." Worship Him in every sorrow; worship Him in deed and word, but still more in humble and loving acceptance of each pang and heartache. Be sure that your mere silent willing endurance is a true act of adoration; and thus, come what may, weariness, pain, desolation, destitution, loneliness, all will carry on His gracious work in you, and amid the sharpest pressure of suffering you will be sending up to His Eternal Throne the precious incense of submission and trust. "Though *He slay* me, yet will I trust in Him."[1]

[1] Job xiv. 15.

The duration and severity of suffering depend solely on God's Will and Power; and if we are tempted to think it strange that our plans for good are hindered, our seeming course of usefulness thwarted, we must remember that it is His All-wise Power which is exercising its rights over us. "Behold the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, shall lop the bough with terror, and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled."[1] He rules over all, His Infinite Wisdom has the right to pour troubles on us, to pierce us with sharpness; we can but bow before it; but surely all murmurs and irritation will be stayed by the thought, "I am in God's Hands, why should I desire to limit His dealings with me?" Self-will and impatience do but add to our pain—it is "kicking against the pricks;" whereas he who bends meekly beneath his trial, however heavy, who looks solely to the Will of God, and is filled with a trusting resignation, is certain to find himself upheld through every pang. Those who can say, "It is my Father's Will," are assuredly learning to "use the vale of misery as a well;" their "pools are filled" with water of consolation and refreshment.[2] Be of good cheer—God has not many willing victims. Do you strive to be one of the few, and nothing will overcome you; "Let them which suffer according to the Will of God commit their souls unto Him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator."[3]

[1] Isa. x. 33. [2] Ps. lxxxiv. 6. [3] 1 Pet. iv. 19.

XXXIX.

Repentance.

"*Repent ye.*"—MATT. iii. 2.

REPENTANCE is of course a necessity for us all, but it varies in form and expression according to the varying characters and circumstances of those who are called to repent. It is well always to remember this, as some persons think of penitence as consisting too exclusively in bodily austerities, and the result is either that they hurt themselves by ill-judged practices, or they grow disheartened and become careless because their own notions of repentance are so hard to carry out. True penitence takes a different shape according to a man's natural disposition, and to the light of grace by which he is led. Some minds are capable of great strictness, others are only able to bear the discipline of restraint in things ordinarily pleasant and acceptable; while there are some who have not even courage to forego anything in outward token of penitence, and these are satisfied with bearing the inevitable deprivations with which God's Providence visits them. *No one* can claim a right to be wholly exempt from *the* "works of repentance," either when imposed or *through* voluntary renunciation or meek acceptance.

In one or other of these shapes every Christian must show forth his penitence, chastening "the flesh, which lusteth against the Spirit," and bringing all proud looks into the obedience of Christ.

By imposed works of repentance, I mean such as we lay upon ourselves, or accept in obedience to our spiritual guides, in hatred of "the spotted garment of the flesh," a desire to shun the world and its snares, and abiding sorrow for past sin. Such repentance leads us to the practice of bodily austerities, solitude, and great inward compunction. But discretion is needful in the use of all these means. Devout penitents are wont to aim at subduing the material part of their nature which rebels against the spirit by bodily austerities, fasting and abstinence, hard lying, scanty sleep, and various other ways by which the body may be spiritualised and purged from the debasing chains of sensuality. Such penitence quickens the mind for contemplation, brings the soul nearer to God, invigorates it for loftier aims. So the Church, as taught by God's Holy Spirit, has ever judged, and all Saints have trodden the paths of bodily hardness, subduing the flesh and making it ready for that glorious time when "mortality shall be swallowed up of life." Such penitence is more than profitable; it seems needful that the body which has sinned in so many ways should be punished, kept under, lest it rebel anew. And surely none who meditate lovingly on the Passion of Jesus, and all that His Most Holy Innocent Body suffered, but will desire to deal severely with their *own sinful bodies*. But, nevertheless, bear in mind

that it is not right to overwhelm your body, and that all such practices should be proportioned to its strength, otherwise your penitence degenerates into indiscretion. God does not lead all men by these paths, and self-will may destroy any good you might gain from them. Therefore all such discipline should be used under direction, and both to guard against your own mistakes, and because all conquest of the body is with an ulterior aim to that of the spirit, submission to guidance is a valuable assistance.

Scarcely any practice of penitence is more valuable than solitude, which opens the way to grace in a very special manner. It may be used by withdrawing in a great measure from society, and paying and receiving as few visits as practicable, by avoiding all unnecessary intercourse with others, which, however agreeable, tends to dissipation of mind. A rule of silence during some part of the day, avoiding the creature and seeking the Creator, is a help towards this spirit of solitude, as also such retirement in your own room as your rightful duties and occupations admit of. Those who live in the world will find great assistance in gaining a truly penitential spirit by striving to dispose their time to the best advantage, so as not to be carried away by the stream of secular occupations and interests, as well as in the more special retirement of a yearly Retreat. Such withdrawal from outward things teaches you how to abide with Jesus in the desert, *and* to bear its weariness and trials with Him, to *confirm* and strengthen your better resolutions and *aspirations*, which thrive in silence and solitude.

Your heart will learn there how to pour itself out in those plaintive cries which most surely reach God's Ear; you will escape the contamination which the world's contact too often brings, and you will grow familiar with His Gracious Voice, which we fail to hear when deafened with earthly clamour. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."[1]

But, after all, you will gain little by these or any external practices, if you have not an inward spirit of penitence: you may afflict your body with every possible penitential discipline, and live in total solitude, but it will be all in vain unless your heart is moved with the true spirit of repentance. It may be that God will give this to you of His free gift, or He may require you faithfully to seek after it by recalling your past sins, omitting nothing, passing over nothing, but sorrowfully pouring all out before Him. Then you will contemplate your offended Lord, and weigh your offences against His Greatness and Majesty, asking for "the spirit of remorse,"[2] and turning patiently aside to "bear the heavy things, and drink the deadly wine" of contrition. In this way your whole inward being will bear "fruits of repentance." But, alas! most men shun alike internal and external penitence. Yet is not your memory soiled by many a foul impression; have not carelessness and levity left their blight upon you; has your will not gone astray and your heart taken from God that which was His to lavish it on the creature? Has not your whole soul been steeped in earthly cares and longings, and have you

[1] *Hos.* ii. 14. [2] Rom. xi. 8.

not a sore need to "turn from your wicked ways and live?"

Again, as to penitence by way of renunciation; no one can really aim at perfection who rejects this help. He who would belong wholly to God must renounce all that is not God; and as nothing so tends to draw us from Him as the pleasures of this life, it follows that we should be specially on our guard against them, lest resting therein, we fail to find rest in Him. Such renunciation may for some comprise innocent amusements, sensual pleasures, and spiritual satisfactions.

As to the first, there are certain social pleasures which, though in themselves innocent, may become hurtful through misuse; and you who aim at real holiness should renounce these; at best they engross time which could be better spent, and they draw you closer to the world. A saint would find no pleasure in such things, because they are not of God, and true penitence finds no satisfaction save in Him. There are many needless social gatherings, in which even if there be nothing said or done which is displeasing to God, time is wasted in mere agreeable talk, profitless, earthly. Those who aim at a higher tone should have markedly different habits of life from the mass of worldly people, especially in the seasons set aside by the Church for penitence. At all events in these you should withdraw from society, and give yourself to good works and devotion. What thoughtful heart would *seek vain* amusements at the season of our Saviour's *Passion,* and who could fritter away his time in *worldly* pleasures if he truly meditated on the Cross?

By sensual pleasures to be renounced I mean curiosity, pleasant sights and sounds, idle gossip and news of the day, refined or luxurious food, superfluous sleep. But to be acceptable all such renunciation must be secret, known only to God. It must be quiet, unobtrusive, not causing discomfort to others. There is rarely a day, scarce an hour, in which the true spirit of penitence cannot find somewhat thus to offer in perpetual sacrifice to God, and such renunciation may take the place of those more severe acts of penitence to which many are unequal, morally or physically. S. Paul inculcates this spirit in the words, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be manifest in our body."[1] This spirit of penitence must go further and teach us to renounce even spiritual satisfactions; not that you are to reject the gracious favours with which it may please God to visit your soul, but that you should offer yourself freely to Him, willing to be without such favours, to be denied the sweet consciousness of His Presence, the light which makes all His dealings plain, the ready flow of prayer, and that inward peace and serenity which are a very paradise to the soul.

Willingness to bear the privation of all these is a very precious offering in God's Sight, and proves that you prize Him above all His gifts. Moreover, the habit of such an oblation will enable you to enjoy those gifts, when granted, with great detachment, and train you in the practice of the way of the Cross. "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me."

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 10

There is another form of penitence which we may call Divine, because man has no part in its ordering; it comes straight from God, and all we have to do is to accept it. To one it comes in the shape of bodily infirmities, a fertile field of spiritual gain if we would but use them rightly. Yet not only irreligious men, but too many well-meaning persons, chafe and fret under pain and sickness, as is betrayed by complaint and murmur, a depressed spirit, and a querulous voice. It may be that bodily weakness hinders your devotional exercises, dulls your mind, and renders you incapable of good and holy thoughts; you are reluctant to give way to the little indulgences required by your condition, and so you complain that ill health injures your spiritual welfare. But submit simply to God's dealings, and you will see even these things in a different light. Bodily pain often purifies the soul even as fire refines metal; and the stains of the flesh are purged away in sickness. "My son, in thy sickness be not negligent."[1] Perhaps the hindrance to your devotional exercises is a more profitable denial than any you could lay upon yourself; instead of subduing the body with austerities, you find it subdued by sickness—a more complete victory than any you could gain: "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it."[2] You say that illness enfeebles your mind and makes you incapable even of good thoughts; but this may be more profitable in its humiliation than your best efforts, *showing* how little you can do of yourself. And as *to the* alleviations and indulgences which your

[1] Ecclus. xxxviii. 9. [2] Jer. x. 19.

condition requires, take them all as in obedience to God's Providence, and believe that whatever is accepted in this spirit will profit you as an act of self-denial might do in health. Be content to be mortified as He pleases, not as you please; "This sickness is for the glory of God"[1] will be then true for you.

Human nature revolts against contradiction in all shapes, and this is one way in which God more frequently chastens us. I do not mean in great trials which occur rarely, but rather in the daily small troubles which beset us, and which we too often turn into occasions of sin rather than of sanctification. Such troubles are the uncongenial tempers of those with whom we live; it may be that even their looks and ways annoy and irritate us as well as their words; or it may be that we are tried by the stupidity, the vulgarity, or the total want of sympathy of those among whom our lot is cast. It may be that petty criticism worries us, or our words are misunderstood and distorted, or silly gossip jars upon us. In all these cases God is providing us with food for a really penitential spirit, and the means of self-denial are put into our hands. Silent endurance of what annoys us, conquered vexation, cheerful patience, and loving charity promote true repentance, lead us to dwell rather on our own imperfections than those of our neighbours, and strengthen the soul. Gentleness and calmness are very infectious, and your home will become happier and better through such conduct. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."[2] And

[1] *John* xi. 4 [2] Prov. xvii. 22.

while you impart your own blessings of peace to those around, the mortifications and trials brought on you by others, so far from becoming intolerable, will help on your sanctification. A peaceful heart always thrives best with God and man.

Interior troubles, desolation, temptation, excited feelings, are another discipline which some are called to accept, and as these are harder to bear than bodily infirmities or the contradiction of men, so they must be met with more resolute courage. The soul needs a penitential discipline no less than the body, and he who is ready to submit to his director, and to renounce worldly ease, out of a spirit of repentance, will assuredly not turn against the discipline which God Himself lays on his soul. Pure and saintly souls have borne such troubles; great sinners, greater in their penitence, have done the like. Purification must come sooner or later, and who would dare to shake off God's Hand when it rests in fatherly correction on His child? You cannot set aside the discipline—you may throw away all its healing grace. How many men live as though they were certain of Paradise, as though for them Judgment and Hell had no meaning! "They have not known or understood, and none considereth in his heart."[1]

Our Saviour Himself, "though He were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered,"[2] and it is He Who said, "Except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish."[3] Let us then, *one and all*, seek repentance, and bear its healing

[1] *Isa.* xliv. 18. [2] Heb. v. 8. [3] Luke xiii. 3.

discipline, if so be our souls may be saved in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."[1]

[1] 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

XL.

The Greatness of God's Mercy.

"How great is the Loving-kindness of the Lord our God."—Ecclus. xvii. 19.

THE thought of God's boundless Mercy, very far from fostering presumption, should kindle fresh energy, new desires to serve Him better in every loving soul; while it drives away all those temptations to despair which will at times visit the souls of such as know that they have grievously offended their Lord. Forgiveness seems hard to obtain in proportion to the dignity of the person offended; and the magnitude of the offence; and of course one who has sinned against God cannot but feel that in so doing he has offended the Greatest and most Terrible of Lords. But even for that very reason he may hope for pardon—for Great as God is, His Loving-kindness is yet greater: He is Infinite and His Mercy is boundless—to limit its measure would be to limit His Power; whereas His very Nature, His Love, and the gracious titles which He takes to Himself, are so many proofs that His Mercy knows no limit.

God's Nature is wholly goodness and mercy, as *all His* works testify. Out of His goodness He *created* men and angels, and out of the same good-

ness He created Heaven and earth. He is the Source of all good, and His delight is to give freely to His creatures. "His mercy is over all His works."[1] Sun, moon, and stars, earth and sea, men and beasts, are His work, and He it is Who orders and sustains them all. How boundless has His Mercy ever shown itself towards guilty men, how tardy His chastisements! The Deluge was forty years preparing; Sodom and Gomorrah were duly warned before their destruction: His people were threatened by one prophet after another before they were carried into captivity. He ever tries and proves sinners, seeking to win them to accept their own salvation, and when at last His justice is constrained to punish the guilty, it is reluctantly. "O My people," He cries, "what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee?"[2] It is altogether contrary to His merciful nature to punish; He made man for Himself, to fill him with blessing and joy, and He does violence to His own intentions when constrained to chasten us; so that a Father has said that to execute justice is contrary to God's very nature. We know what an earthly parent suffers when constrained to punish his child, yet God suffers even more, when justice constrains Him to lay aside His tender compassion and chasten His erring children; and moreover how ready He is to pardon, if the sinner will but turn from his evil ways! No one can so earnestly desire to be forgiven, as God desires to forgive; and no prodigal son ever longed to return to his father, as God longs for His backsliding children to return to

[1] *Ps. cxiv. 9.* [2] Mic. vi. 3.

Him. No mother ever rushed so eagerly to snatch her child from the jaws of death, as He eagerly stretches forth His Hand to save the penitent from destruction; the sinner can scarce frame his lips to utter a sincere cry for pardon, and lo! he is forgiven; he has scarce conceived a fervent longing to be absolved from past sin, and God's compassion hears and accepts him. In that boundless Mercy He receives sinners rather as their Friend than as their Judge, for the judge is constrained to punish sin, but when once the sinner does but humbly confess his fault, God blots out all memory thereof and forgives him freely. Who that has ever put away sin and returned to God, but knows the freedom and peace which an absolved conscience brings? God is never severe to a true penitent. Cast your eyes over the pages of Holy Scripture; dwell upon the history of David, his grievous sin, and its instant absolution so soon as he truly repented. "The Lord hath put away thy sin."[1] Remember Peter denying his Lord, yet forgiven when he "went out and wept bitterly." Saul the persecutor had no sooner yielded to grace than he became Paul the Saint; Magdalene had but to cast herself at Jesus' Feet, and her sins were forgiven. We can never so shut Him out from the souls He has created, but that He will return to cleanse and heal us if we will be healed.

What was the whole life of our Incarnate Lord, save healing the sick, raising the dead, protecting *sinners from* the Pharisees' rigour, performing *countless* miracles of mercy? All creation is full

[1] 2 Sam. xii. 13.

of His Mercy, for He is everywhere, and His Presence is Mercy's very self. There is no limit to His Grace; no "daysman" to lay his hand between God and the penitent soul. Violence, intreaty, sacrifice, may fail, but love never fails to ensure Pardon,—"love is stronger than death." God proved His Love by giving His Son to die for sinners; and which is greatest, an Infinite or a finite gift? If He gave so immeasurably Infinite a gift for us, "how then will He not give us all things?" If the Father spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will He refuse to forgive us our sins?

We may appeal to God as the work of His Hands, the clay moulded by a Heavenly potter. As a sculptor cherishes the statue he has wrought, smiting it with hammer and chisel, and many a biting blow, until he brings it to perfection, so is man God's "image and likeness," damaged and defiled indeed, until He cleanses and purifies it. We may appeal to Him as His children. It is told of a great King, that when his minister marvelled to find him playing with his child, he made answer that those who have no child cannot enter into a father's love; and much more may we say of God, that earthly hearts can never fathom His boundless love for His penitent children.

Love is effectual in proportion to its strength and its duration; new loves and new friendships are proverbially weaker than those of long standing. But God's Love for sinners has existed from all eternity, and has been ready to be lavished *on each returning* wanderer. "I have loved thee

with an Everlasting Love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."[1] It was love which drew forth those wondrous words from Jesus on the Cross, "I thirst;" love for the souls of men. His Arms are stretched wide to receive them. "Come to Me ALL ye," He says; no crime so grievous but He bids them come. It is thus that His Love is fed. The innocent and pure at heart may satisfy His Purity; the worship of Paradise His Majesty, Hell satisfies His Justice, but His Mercy can be satisfied by nought save the return of wandering souls.

Finally, God loves sinners, because they are marked with Jesus' Blood, and the brightness thereof washes out the darkness of sin.

Call to mind all the gracious names by which this All-Merciful God deigns to call Himself. Earthly love is wont to pour itself out in endearing words and names, but it is wondrous, indeed, that God should vouchsafe to do the like. Yet hear Him calling Himself our Good Shepherd, and declaring that He leaves the holy sheep while He wanders into the wilderness after those that have strayed, carrying them, when found, on His Shoulders, bearing them in His Arms with joy and triumph.

Again, He likens His guardian love for His people to that with which the hen gathers her chickens under her wings. He calls Himself our Friend—"a friend which sticketh closer than a brother." Yet He also calls Himself "our Brother;" and He likens His love to that of a mother. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort

[1] Jer. xxxi. 3.

you." He calls Himself our Bridegroom, and says that "no man hateth his own flesh, but cherisheth it." Nor is His Love fickle and uncertain like that of man; men use terms of endearment out of mere form, or insincerely. But God does not do so. As a Shepherd He seeks His sheep; as a Son He gathers His feeble ones under His wings; as a Brother He ministers to the needs of His brethren; as a Mother He yearns over His children; as a Bridegroom He binds the soul indissolubly to Himself. "What I have said, shall I not make it sure?"

Do you fear to come before the Presence of His Majesty, Which you have so grievously offended? Consider His merciful Nature, and come boldly, come with hearty repentance, ask to be forgiven, and all your sins will be blotted out. If He has withheld the punishment due to your sins during your past impenitence, He will assuredly forgive you now that you repent. If He restrained a deserved judgment while you were His enemy, He will not inflict it when you have become His friend; if it grieves Him to punish the unrepenting sinner who rebels openly against Him, do not fear but that He will readily cast away His rod when He beholds you at His Feet in humble penitence. Hasten to approach Him, and however you may yearn to be accepted and forgiven, be sure that He desires far more longingly to accept and forgive you;—you can scarce make one step in advance, but He will come to meet you; shed but one tear, and He will wash away your sin; stretch forth your hands in loving intreaty, and He will receive you into His Bosom; *breathe* one hearty sigh for pardon, and forthwith

He will blot out all your sins. Can you look around and doubt it? Is not the whole world full of His Mercies? All times, all places are filled therewith. Not one Saint now in Paradise were there save through His Mercy, and the very lost once had its gates open to them, inviting them to enter in. Look the world over, all ages, all events in the history of man breathe nought save His Mercy; no sin so grievous but that Mercy can blot it out, no sorrow so heavy but Mercy can lighten it!

Who can ponder on all such boundless Mercy, and refuse to come to Him in loving confidence? Your sin has not been as grievous as that of David or Magdalene, but your pardon will be as free. Fix your thoughts upon His ever-flowing fountain of love, and hope; see how that Love encircles you, how it has ever guarded you; look to Jesus Crucified, and you cannot doubt that He loves you still. What could love do which He has not done? Though your sins be as scarlet, though they cannot be numbered in their multitude, come to Him in trusting love and confidence, and they will be remitted, every one. Come to Him quickly, eagerly; accept His proffered mercy, pour out your sorrows, your misery before Him. Ask confidently, hope infinitely, all ye sorrowful penitent souls, and "REST IN THE LORD."

XLI.

Hope for the Hopeless.

"*He will have compassion according to the multitude of His Mercies.*"—LAM. iii. 32.

THERE are two kinds of mercy; the one purely human, as that which we feel for those who suffer from war or famine, oppression or destitution; for all earthly sorrows which force themselves upon our notice, and excite our natural sympathy. The other shape in which mercy is displayed is the forgiveness of injury, and this is altogether Divine. For this it needed that God should come on earth to teach men the true meaning of forgiveness, unknown before. Forgiveness is a purely Christian grace. Man may, by God's help, imitate Him in forgiving injury and wrong done to themselves, but there is one great difference, *i.e.*, that whereas man's patience may be exhausted, God's patience and forgiveness are infinite, and the greater the offence so much more abundant is His Mercy. "Thine only is it," says S. Augustine, "to be easily touched, to suffer long, to be pitiful, my God, my merciful God." Thus it is the very magnitude of a sinner's guilt which draws him to hope in God's boundless Mercy.

Is it not a fact that nature always ministers first

to the member which suffers most? When the body is collapsing, the heart first feels the benefit of a stimulant,—and every mother lavishes her first and tenderest care upon her weakest, most suffering child. Now this is but an ordinary natural instinct, yet it is a faint shadowing forth of God's Mercy and Compassion for those who have most grievously sinned against Him. They are the sorest wounds of His Church, the son sick unto death, and to such as these God comes, the Good Physician, bringing healing and life.

But why should His tender Mercy be so quickly roused on the sinner's behalf? Solely because of that sinner's misery. We know that in proportion as any emotion or passion is called forth, so it gains strength. Love is kindled by beauty, hatred by injury, avarice by increased wealth. Even so as God's Mercy rests in pitying love upon the sinner, it is strengthened by the sinner's misery and contrition. As his needs increase, God's succours grow more profuse; his wounds cry aloud, and God's Ear is never closed to the voice of sorrow. Grievous diseases require special remedies, and great conversions are not wrought without special grace. One who is far gone in vice will scarce be converted, save by some startling touch of fear; and when such an one is brought to a real sorrow for sin, we may be sure that God has dealt with him in very special mercy. Christ has said, "It is *not* the Will of your Father Which is in Heaven *that one* of these little ones should perish." His *Mercy is* proportioned to the sinner's needs; it is greater than the sin, therefore the sinner is won.

The Shepherd leaves all to pursue the straying sheep, and in Heaven itself there is joy when it is found.

If the sinner, trembling before God's Justice, replies that he has no claim to God's Mercy, let him remember those gracious words, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" giving, so to say, the first-fruits of the Incarnation to penitent sinners. God prepared Paradise and its joys for His saints, but He took our flesh upon Him for sinners, thereby giving His Mercy to them as their special heritage. He has given the greatest sinner a right to salvation, and nothing required thereto will be withheld from those who truly repent.

Sinners may give glory to God above all men, by setting forth "more abundantly than they all" the Infinite Mercy of God; the only sin which can bar the door of that Mercy is doubt therein, and despair. To say that our sins are too many or too grievous for pardon, is to limit and doubt His Mercy. It requires a greater power to pardon the sinner than to create worlds, but His Power knows no bounds, His Goodness and Mercy can and will forgive all who truly repent.

Only the sinner must resolve never more to offend Him. Surely such goodness will win the soul from sin—who would grieve so great loving-kindness? Patience subdues all violence—His patience must conquer man's sin. Man's sin cries out for mercy and wins it, but he must use that mercy, not abuse it. It cannot be made a cloak for fresh sin. Let the sinner prove his claim to mercy by a real un-

mistakeable change in his whole life—let him show forth therein that God's Mercy is greater than his sin, let all men see how great and good God is in His penitent child. Let what was dishonour be turned to praise, the heart that clung to the world be turned to God only; let it be the life's endeavour to set forth His Glory.

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His Salvation."[1]

[1] Isa. xxv. 9.

THE END.

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